

HEALTHY FOOD HACKS FOR THE NEW YEAR

Sunset

140 HOLIDAY
IDEAS

FABULOUS
PARTY MENU

for a

CROWD

—
ULTIMATE
GUIDE

to growing

CITRUS

RETURN TO

BIG
SUR

REDWOOD
CANYON GLAMPSITES
AT VENTANA



THE PERFECT GIFTS

for campers, cooks & more



* Based on an average of sound ratings of 24" Full Size Stainless Steel Tub dishwashers contained in major brands websites. Major brands defined as TraQline Top 5 Market Share December 2016.

** Vs. major brands with 3rd rack. Major brands defined as TraQline Top 5 Market Share March 2017.

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December/January



PROP STYLING: ROD HIPS KIN D

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By Lauren Ladoceur

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Susan MacTavish Best knows what makes a good holiday bash—and it's not perfection.

By Margo True

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By Joanna Linberg

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December/January

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GF: Gluten-free; LC: Low calorie; LS: Low sodium; V: Vegetarian; VG: Vegan

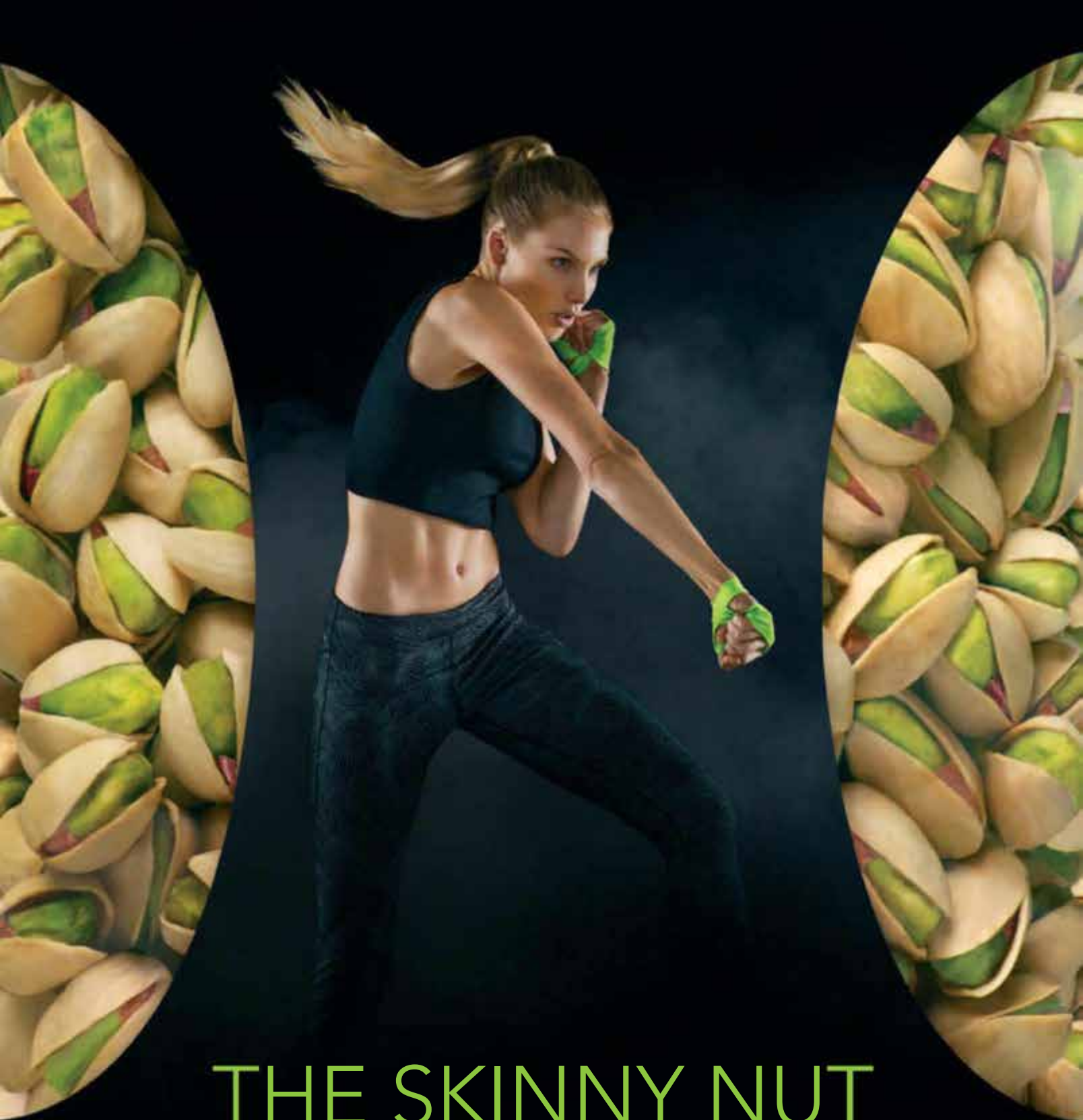
Our full guide to nutrition and good cooking: sunset.com/cookingguide.

On our cover

Healthy food hacks page 83 **Holiday ideas** pages 9, 30, 33, 40, 46, 62, 83, 90, 92, 96 **Fabulous party menu** page 62 **Ultimate guide to citrus** page 40 **Return to Big Sur** page 54 **The perfect gifts** page 9

Tucked into 20 acres of tall trees off Highway 1, Ventana Big Sur's 15 new Redwood Canyon Glampsites offer quiet luxury in safari-style canvas tents. Campers Nick Gallant and Kendra Baker (pictured) got married in Big Sur and were back to celebrate their 10th anniversary. Photograph by Thomas J. Story; prop styling by Emma Star Jensen





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WINTER IN BLOOM



↑
**A CUT ABOVE:
OUR TEST
KITCHEN'S SPIN
ON A
CLASSIC YULE
LOG DESSERT**

Then there's the *Sunset* take on an edible Yule log (page 92), a showstopper dessert dreamed up by senior Food editor Elaine Johnson. And because I have a personal obsession with cactus-shaped cakes, I asked Test Kitchen manager Angela Brassinga to create another version: the splendidly blooming saguaro you see above (watch our how-to video at sunset.com/cactuscake). For the second year in a row, contributing editor Cat Dash brings us an immensely shoppable gift guide tailored to our fantasy Western selves (page 9). And as for that most virtuous of New Year's traditions—clean eating—we've got that covered, too, with a grab bag of healthy food hacks that I swear made my mouth water (page 83).

Finally, in the spirit of new beginnings, Travel editor Lauren Ladoceour gifts us with a lyrical comeback story: a feature on our beloved Big Sur (page 54). Because who doesn't long for a feel-good tale, especially at this time of year? From our *Sunset* family to yours, wishing you a serene and joyous holiday season.

IRENE EDWARDS, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF | [@irene_sunset](https://twitter.com/irene_sunset) | readerletters@sunset.com

WHAT A YEAR, RIGHT? I think we can all agree that making it to this moment constitutes an achievement worth celebrating. So turn to page 40, pour a Finger Lime Vodka Gimlet, and join me in a toast to the theme of this December/January issue: holiday classics with a Western twist.

Let's start with a good old-fashioned house party, the kind where interesting and diverse strangers are packed elbow to elbow over platters of delectable food and drink. The most memorable hosts, in my experience, share a sort of madcap generosity, and Susan MacTavish Best is no exception (page 62). I was lucky enough to be one of the guests during our photo shoot at her San Francisco home, and between the brilliantly odd mix of people and the brass quintet in the living room, the evening felt radiant and enchanted. It was so much fun that when I torched my sleeve on an errant candle, I simply brushed off the singed pieces and carried on with my conversation.

New & Now



Pick the perfect tree

Grab a hot cocoa and take the family on a Yuletide adventure to find a stately spruce, pine, or fir for your home. Here are the West's most charming farms for sourcing your holiday tree: sunset.com/treefarms.

Winter escapes

Whether you're looking for a splurge or a deal, these end-of-year trips will put you in the holiday spirit. From cozy lodges and snowy getaways to sunny beaches, our picks for the best places to visit this season: sunset.com/wintertravel.



Healthy eats

Superfoods, good-for-you soups, and more tasty ways to refresh and recharge your eating habits in the new year: sunset.com/healthy.

JOIN THE SUNSET COMMUNITY

Write to us, tweet us, or tag us on your Instagram; we promise we read each and every one of your comments.



THE DESERT IS WILD

Absolutely
untamed.



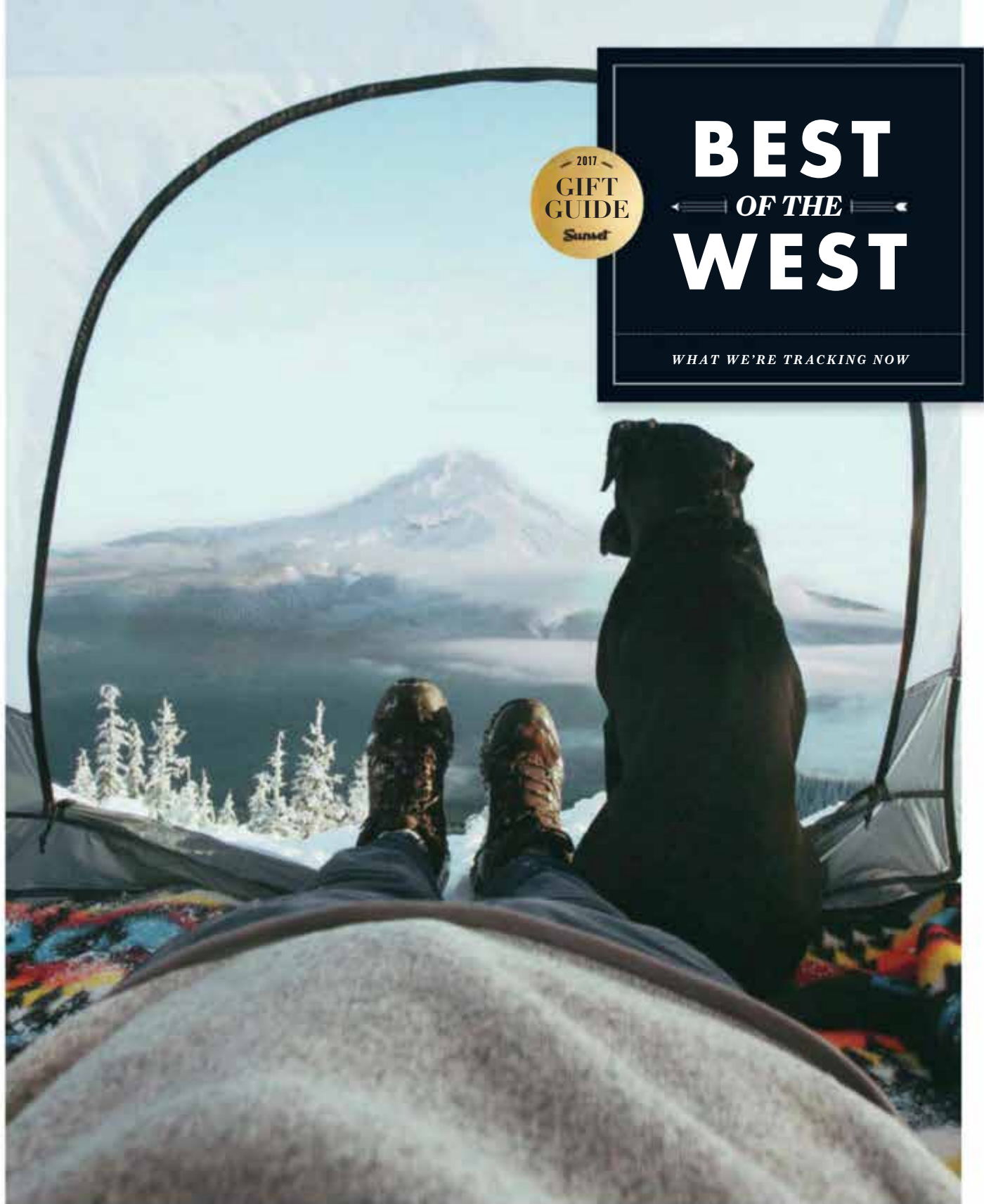
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2017
GIFT
GUIDE
Sunset

BEST OF THE WEST

WHAT WE'RE TRACKING NOW

THE GIFT GUIDE OF OUR DREAMS

We lusted after every single one of these items; you will too. *Produced by Catherine Dash*



THE ADVENTURER + HIS DOG

1 / BEACON LANTERN
Carabiner and rechargeable battery, in copper, \$40; bonesliving.com.

2 / EDDIE BAUER MEN'S
SHERPA-LINED SHIRT JACKET \$119; eddiebauer.com.

3 / LINK AKC SMART DOG
COLLAR GPS enabled, \$177; amazon.com.

4 / STORMPROOF
MATCH KIT \$11; potterybarn.com.

5 / SAMSUNG GEAR
360 VR CAMERA \$167; amazon.com.

6 / JETBOIL GENESIS
BASE CAMP SYSTEM Two-burner stove and traveling bag, \$350; jetboil.com.

7 / L.L. BEAN WAXED-CANVAS
OUTDOOR BLANKET 6' x 4' 4", \$200; llbean.com.

8 / EDDIE BAUER MEN'S
K-8 BOOT \$240; eddiebauer.com.

9 / 50 THINGS TO DO WITH A
PENKNIFE By Matt Collins (Princeton Architectural Press, 2017), \$17; papress.com.

10 / WIT & DELIGHT
PLAID BUFFALO CHECK DOGJACKET \$13; target.com.

11 / FOUND MY ANIMAL
BUFFALO PLAID ROPE DOG LEASH Marine-grade recycled rope, \$62; foundmyanimal.com.

12 / YETI TUNDRA 35
Cooler in white, \$300; yeti.com.

13 / STANLEY HAND
VACUUM MUG 16 fl. oz., in orange, \$40; pendleton-usa.com.

14 / GSI OUTDOORS
BOULDER FLASK 10 fl. oz., in orange, \$15; gsioutdoors.com.

15 / ASSORTED
ADVENTURE PATCHES Iron-on, from \$5; shoproadtripca.com.

16 / LEICA SOFORT
Instant camera, in white, \$299, film from \$13; leica-camerausa.com.



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THE FARMER + THE COOK

1 / NORTH OF WEST OYSTER TEA TOWEL
In Salmon, \$20; shop northofwest.com.

2 / PAIR OF PINNIES GIFT SET \$130; rough linen.com.

3 / EPIC SEEDS \$4; epicseeds.net.

4 / GARDMAN WATERING CAN
Galvanized steel, in Hunter Green, \$28; amazon.com.

5 / SARAH KERSTEN SET OF NESTING COVERED BOWLS
In Classic White, \$250; sarahkersten.com.

6 / VINTAGE-STYLE KITCHEN SCALE
With removable bowl, from \$49; food52.com.

7 / ESSENTIAL GARDENING TOOLS
Stainless steel trowel, fork, cultivator, \$124; themaryn.com.

8 / KITCHENAID 3.5 CUP MINI FOOD PROCESSOR
In Aqua Sky, \$50; kitchenaid.com.

9 / SATSUMAS PLANT STAND
Ladder with five plant pots, \$40; ikea.com.

10 / OATMEAL LINEN OVEN MITT
From \$30; food52.com.

11 / BEACH BLANKET STRIPE TABLE RUNNER
In Surf, by Kate Capone, from \$46; minted.com.

12 / LIBERTY FOR ANTHROPOLOGIE MUG
16 oz. in Bonnie Bloom, \$16; anthropologie.com.

13 / THE PLAT CULINARY TOTE
Organic cotton canvas in Plum, from \$46; aplatsf.com.

14 / GREEN ECO PLASTIC MARKET TOTE
From \$38; shop.bealdsburgshed.com.

15 / STONWARE SERVING BOWL BY SARA PALOMA
In Crater White, \$220; etsy.com.

16 / KITCHEN TOOL & STORAGE JAR SET
Spiralizer, juicer, grater lids, \$40; food52.com.



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CELEBRATION HAS ARRIVED



THE DESERT TRIPPER

1 / PENDLETON BAGGU
In Harding Royal, from \$17; pendleton-usa.com.

2 / MARISA MASON HELENA NECKLACE 30" leather cord with 6" tassel, in Saddle, \$66; marisamason.com.

3 / SOUTHWEST SMUDGE TRIO Hand-harvested desert sage, white sage, cedar, \$14; farmshop.lospoblanos.com.

4 / EASY TO BREATHE CACTUS HUG MUG Wheel-thrown black stoneware, with Stone Denim handle, \$54; shopsummercamp.com.

5 / OUT OF MY BOX THICK LEASH \$50; crateandbarrel.com.

6 / AVESHA MICHAEL THE REMI PLANTER Handmade, gold painted, 2.25" high, \$32; etsy.com.

7 / FACETED GLASS TERRARIUM—IRIDESCENT From \$19; westelm.com.

8 / HAND-KNOTTED MACRAMÉ POUF 24" diameter, 14" high, in grey, \$199; rbteen.com.

9 / AMO WEST TEE \$115; amodenim.com.

10 / MIRA MIRROR \$80; umbra.com.

11 / FIONA BLUSH FRINGE THROW \$139; dearkeaton.com.

12 / AROMATHERAPY EYE PILLOW Handmade, naturally dyed silk or cotton, \$32/each; gammafolk.com.

13 / MUDPUPPY HANGING AIR PLANT CRADLE Handcrafted, shown in White Earthenware, from \$36; mudpuppy.etsy.com.

14 / LUNA WALL HANGING \$75; poketo.com.

15 / CACTUS GARDEN LIMITED-EDITION ART By Baumbirdy, from \$31; minted.com.

16 / CACTUS DISH 3" x 2" jewelry holder, cast in bronze, \$105; seaworthydpdx.com.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ANDREW T. KEARNS, JEFFERY CROSS (16); PROP STYLING: CHRISTINE WOLHEIM



DIGITAL BONUS More great ideas for your sweetie, kids, parents, and everyone else on your list: [sunset.com/gifts](https://www.sunset.com/gifts).

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GUIDEBOOK

POWDER TO THE PEOPLE

In the Colorado Rockies, epic snows transform the mountains into idyllic winter wonderlands.

By Elisabeth Kwak-Hefferan

GLENNWOOD
SPRINGS

GRAND
COUNTY

ASPEN

BROWN CANNON III/INTERSECTION PHOTOS

WE GET IT: When the mercury plummets and the winds blow, it's awfully tempting to burrow under a duvet and binge on Netflix until spring. To coax yourself outside, it helps to have some powerful carrots: spellbinding wildernesses, sure, but also lively towns full of great food, cozy rooms, and locals who are fanatical about making the most of the season. Which brings us to Colorado. It can be an

extreme place in winter—some spots get more than 35 feet of snow in a single year. But after the storms blow east, the pines practically glow against a thick, fluffy blanket of snow. The skies turn a brilliant blue, and gleeful, parka-clad masses burst outdoors. Enough excuses: It's time to fall in love with winter, and these are the three Colorado spots to make it happen. →



ASPEN

5,547 SKIABLE ACRES + 300 INCHES OF SNOW = SLOPE CENTRAL

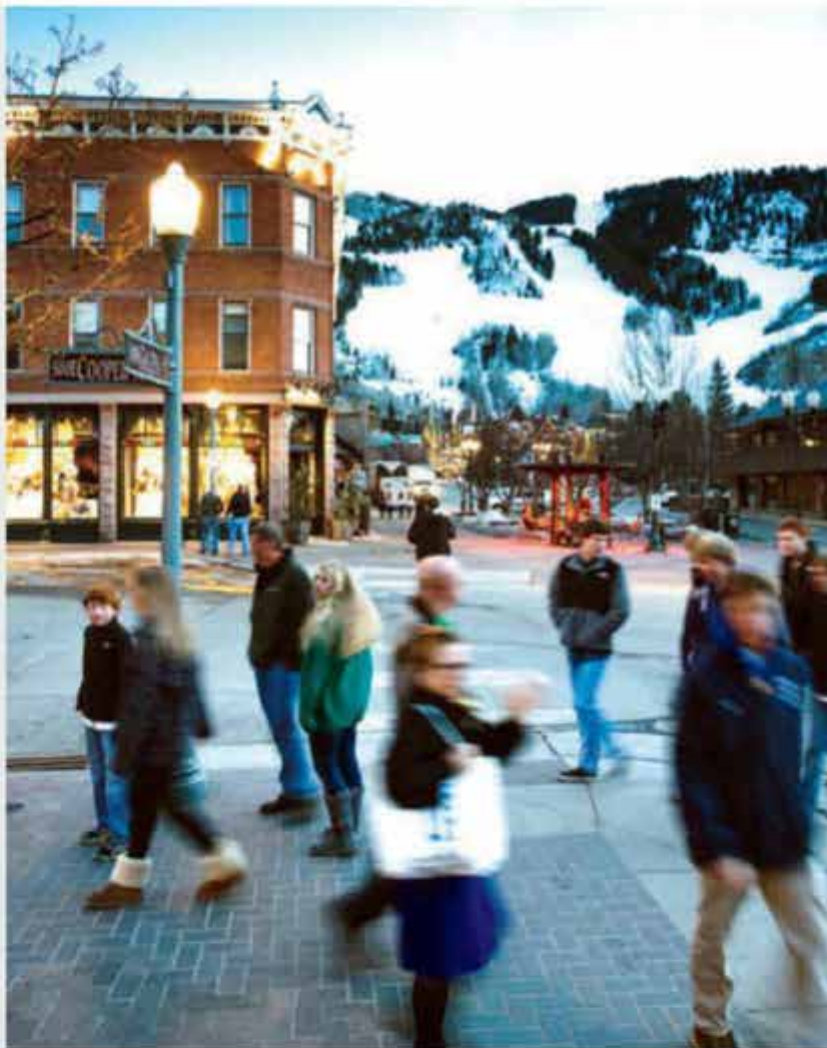
MUST DO

Whether it's a heart-pounding descent at Aspen Highlands, a careful glide down a bunny hill at Snowmass, a trip to a pop-up Champagne bar on the flank of Aspen Mountain, or a snowboarding lesson at Buttermilk, the four resorts that make up **ASPEN SNOWMASS** (multi-resort lift tickets from \$101; aspensnowmass.com) are about the downhill action. Back in town, most places bend over backward to cater to the powder crowd.

ASPEN ART MUSEUM (free; aspenartmuseum.org) has a strict no-ski-boots policy, but they'll lend you a pair of slippers at the front desk so you can check out their cutting-edge contemporary installations. In Snowmass Village, **THE SPA AT VICEROY SNOWMASS** (\$95; viceroyhotelsandresorts.com) offers rejuvenating 30-minute ski-in/ski-out treatments focused on keeping you limber.

EAT + SLEEP

Fourteen miles south of downtown, **PINE CREEK COOKHOUSE** (pinecreekcookhouse.com) isn't accessible by car in winter. Instead, after you park at the ghost town of Ashcroft, you click into a pair of Nordic skis (included with dinner) and glide a mile and a half for mountain fare like elk



IT DOESN'T GET MUCH more perfect than cold nights in Aspen, with its glowing lamp posts and snow-dusted trees. In a state jam-packed with winter ski havens, Aspen stands out for the sheer vastness of its alpine empire divided into four massive resorts. Surprisingly, that doesn't translate into endless, purgatorial gridlock. It's far enough from Denver to keep the crowds at bay, meaning you rarely have to wait more than five minutes to catch a ski lift. After the boots and masks come off, the town brings out its trademark glitz with fancy boutiques, luxe hotels, and splurge-worthy restaurants.

chops and rainbow trout served in a log chalet. (There's also a sleigh ride option for nonskiers.) Come bedtime, the **LIMELIGHT HOTEL** (from \$365; limelighthotels.com) back in town strikes the perfect balance between classy and laid-back, with slope-friendly features like resort shuttles, a ski valet, and an après hangout where you can nurse a \$4 brew next to one of the outdoor firepits.

INSIDER'S TIP

Yes, there's a Gucci boutique, but downtown's **ASPEN THRIFT SHOP** (aspenthriftshop.org) is the real must-browse store. The rich and famous often load up on ski gear while visiting—and then unload the barely worn, high-end items at this shop, which sells them secondhand for a song.

GETTING HERE

More than 200 flights a week—including nonstops from cities like Denver, Los Angeles, and Phoenix—land at Aspen/Pitkin County Airport, just 4 miles from the main hub.

GEAR



The versatile, eye-catching **Atomic Hawx Ultra XTD 130** ski boots (\$950; atomic.com) are ideal for Aspen's style-conscious slopes.



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GRAND COUNTY

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MUST DO

Does the mere idea of getting on a pair of cross-country skis make your knees shake? The beginner-friendly loop trails at the YMCA-run **SNOW MOUNTAIN RANCH** (single-day pass \$20; snowmountainranch.org) in Granby offer some of the most convenient, low-key gliding you're likely to find. Take one of the group or private lessons at their Nordic Center. If you already know what you're doing, head 10 miles east to **DEVIL'S THUMB RANCH** (single-day pass \$22; devilsthumbbranch.com) in Tabernash, an equally great portal to cross-country heaven. It's the ritzier of the two, with an on-site spa and a lively après scene at Heck's Tavern, plus some intense experts-only trails up in the surrounding hills.

EAT + SLEEP

Jump-start a day of kick-and-gliding with espresso and just-baked cinnamon rolls at **BLUE WATER BAKERY** (bluewaterbakery.com), a quaint coffee shop in Grand Lake. For dinner, locals love **TABERNASH TAVERN** (tabernashtavern.com) for its crackling fire and menu anchored by fortifying steaks and burgers. At the end of the day, lay your head at one of the log cabins



THE ACTION IN Grand County is more horizontal than vertical. Seventy percent of the county is public land, and the pine and aspen forests are crisscrossed by an impressive network of well-groomed trails, making this one of the West's top destinations for cross-country (aka Nordic) skiing. In between jaunts among the trees, you'll find slow-paced, proudly Western towns. The old-timey wooden storefronts of Grand Lake are ridiculously charming after the first snowfall. Winter Park is more upscale, its shops stocked with organic groceries and high-tech outdoor gear. Some hamlets are even connected by ski trails.

at **DEVIL'S THUMB RANCH** (from \$379; devilsthumbbranch.com)—they're almost too cozy to believe, outfitted with a fireplace and a kitchenette for mixing up whiskey-laced hot toddies.

INSIDER'S TIP

There's more than one way to glide around—like, say, being whisked through snowy woods in a cherry-red sleigh pulled by a team of draft horses. The 40-minute rides with **DASHING THRU THE SNOW SLEIGH RIDES** (\$35; winterparkleighrides.com) near Fraser wrap up with a campfire marshmallow roast.

GETTING HERE

Granby—the biggest town in Grand County—is about 2 hours from Denver International Airport via Interstate 70 and U.S. 40. Consider renting a 4WD vehicle for navigating Berthoud Pass.

GEAR

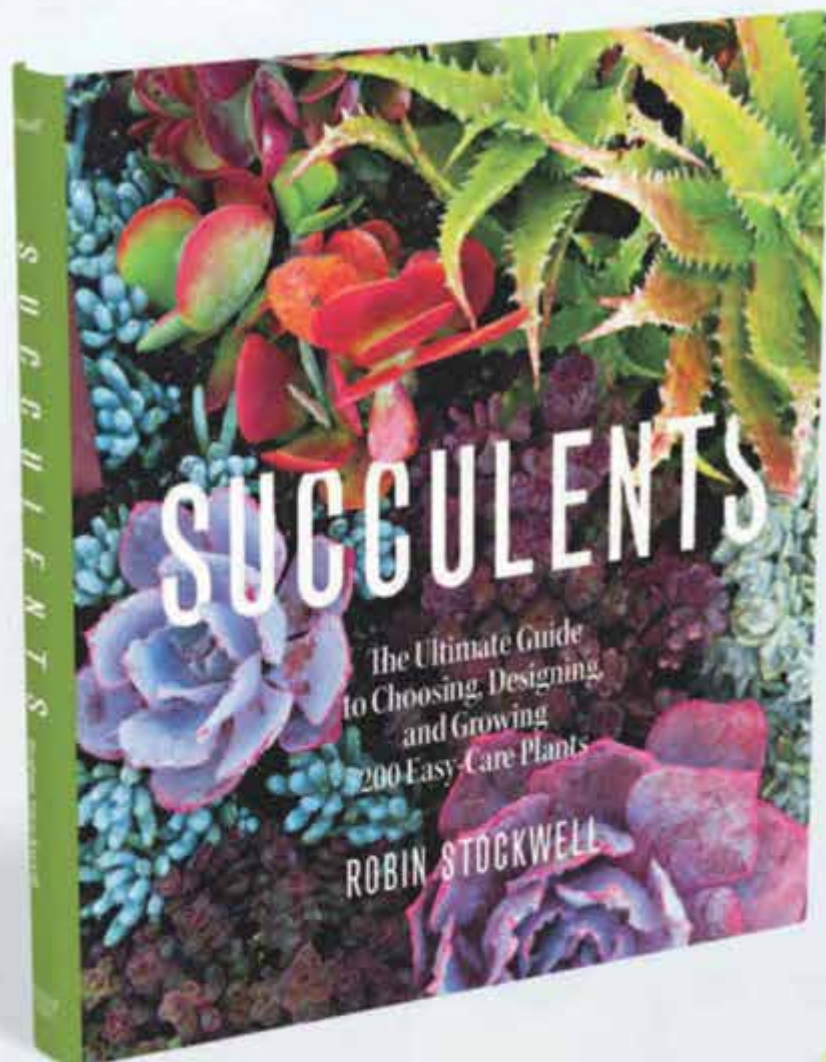


Like a comfy fleece but with more protection from snowflakes, the stretchy, super-breathable **Montane Iridium Hoodie** (\$150; rei.com) is just the ticket to keep your core warm and dry.

VERSATILE EFFORTLESS STYLISH

“Let these ideas inspire your creativity.”

—Robin Stockwell



This essential primer on succulents offers design inspiration, DIY projects, and advice on care and cultivation.

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GLENWOOD SPRINGS

3.5 MILLION GALLONS OF HOT SPRING WATER + 35° WEATHER = AN ICY-HOT OASIS

MUST DO

Holding 1,071,000 gallons, the big pool at **GLENWOOD HOT SPRINGS RESORT** (admission from \$13.50; hotspringspool.com) claims to be the world's largest hot spring soak. The property has catered to spa seekers since 1888; these days, it's best for splashy families or lap swimmers. **IRON MOUNTAIN HOT SPRINGS** (from \$20/day; ironmountainhotsprings.com), which opened its doors in 2015, features 16 smaller pools overlooking the Colorado River. Do like the residents do and take the plunge early in the morning, when you'll practically have the water to yourself. For a twist on the sauna experience, descend into the subterranean vapor caves at **YAMPAH HOT SPRINGS & SPA** (\$15; yampahspa.com), where geothermally heated mineral water fuels the steam.

EAT + SLEEP

Patrons young and old get their sugar fix at **SWEET COLORADOUGH** (sweetcoloradough.com); here, egg-and-bacon sammies are made with doughnuts instead of bread slices. Not much for sweets? At **THE PULLMAN** (thepullmangws.com), local restaurateur Mark Fischer serves up satisfying dishes like trout with



WHO SAYS WINTER fun always has to involve frosty noses and numbing toes? At Glenwood Springs, naturally heated mineral water bubbles to the surface all year, but there's something magical about easing into a steaming pool while fat snowflakes fall all around. A trio of resorts along the Colorado River taps into the hot stuff, offering everything from a massive outdoor soak to intimate tubs. Of course, there's plenty of snowbound fun to be had outside of a soak, but no matter how you choose to fill your days, there's only one way to end them. Peel off your robe, slip into a hot spring, and say *ahhh*. ❄️

almond romesco and truffle potato pierogies in a warm, modern setting. Then sleep it off at a spot where gunfighters like Louis "Diamond Jack" Alterie once took off their boots: **THE HOTEL DENVER** (from \$159; thehoteldenver.com). Within walking distance of the Glenwood Hot Springs Resort, the hotel no longer traffics in rough characters—just exposed brick, original art, and charming antique beds made up with tasteful quilts.

INSIDER'S TIP

If you can pull yourself from the hot springs, check out one of Colorado's largest cave systems, which extends underfoot at **GLENWOOD CAVERNS ADVENTURE PARK** (tours from \$29; glenwoodcaverns.com). Its passages are stuffed with fantastical stalactites and curtains of flowstone.

GETTING HERE

Eagle County Regional Airport is 30 miles away. If you want more flight options, the Aspen/Pitkin County Airport is almost as close, a 40-mile drive along State 82.

GEAR



After a plunge, dry off with a super-soft cotton Pendleton's Mountain Majesty Bath Towel (\$40; pendleton-usa.com) in a Southwest-inspired pattern.



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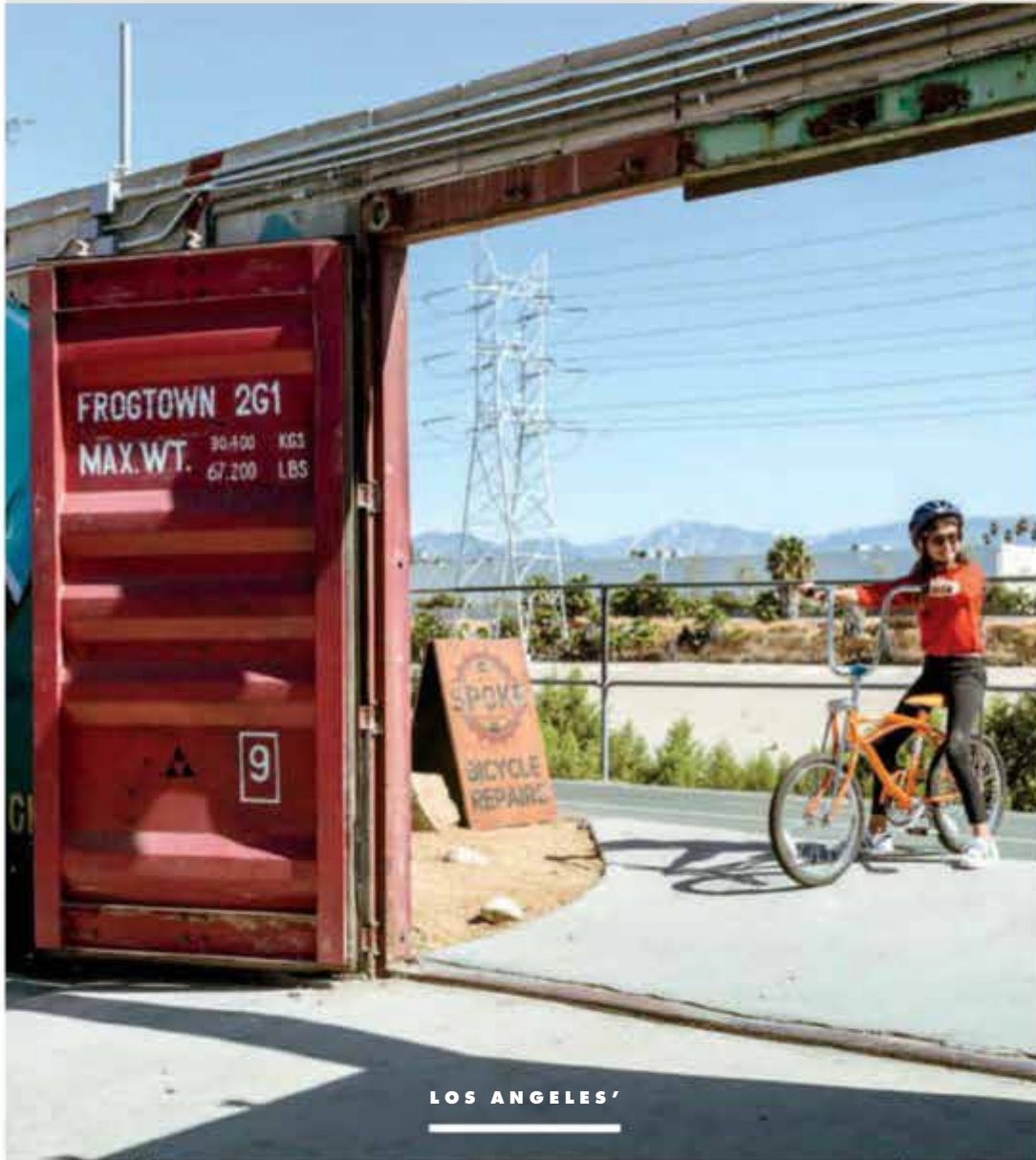


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Blue herons, bikes, and boho art flourish in a once-neglected waterway neighborhood. By Jessica Ritz

PERFECT DAY



LOS ANGELES'

FROGTOWN

When you think of L.A., one of the last things that comes to mind is nature. But in Frogtown, the Los Angeles River thrives anew as a result of revitalization efforts. The mixed industrial and residential pocket around it is showing signs of dramatic change too. Warehouses tucked between Riverside Drive and the concrete-bound waterway are transitioning to artists' studios, galleries, homes, and restaurants, as well as a music venue import from Brooklyn. Throughout the area, cyclists abound, taking advantage of the bike path that follows the current. So ditch the car and pedal your way through L.A.'s favorite up-and-coming hood.

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9 A.M. Start by fueling up with locally roasted Trystero Coffee alongside hemp- and date-laced granola at **Spoke Bicycle Cafe** (spokebicyclecafe.com). Repurposed shipping containers shelter the extensive patio from the bike path; it makes for a good first stop to download riding intel from fellow cafe customers.

10 A.M. After renting a cruiser at Spoke, enter the **L.A. River Bikepath** (lamountains.com). When you need a little shade and rest, visit the Rattlesnake, Lewis MacAdams Riverfront, and Egret pocket parks along the 2-plus-mile-long section of the west bank. If you've got some extra time, explore the **Bowtie Project** (clockshop.org) site-specific and environmental installations in Glassell Park to the northeast, as well as the **Los Angeles River Center and Gardens** (lamountains.com) to the southeast.

1 P.M. In a town known for celebrity culture, **Wax Paper** (waxpaperco.com) flips the script, serving sandwiches named after public radio hosts. Vegetarians will go for the Lakshmi Singh or Ira



Clockwise from above: Salvare Goods; Marsh Park; Zebulon music venue.
Previous page: Spoke Bicycle Cafe.

Glass, while carnivores can savor the Audie Cornish ham stack with cheddar, honey butter, and cornichon vinaigrette.

2:30 P.M. Return your bike to Spoke, and continue with a 10-minute walk to the vintage goods and craft materials at **French General Store** (frenchgeneral.com). Owner and DIY maven Kaari Meng hosts all kinds of hands-on workshops, so check hours in advance,



GETTING HERE
Frogtown is 5 miles north of downtown L.A., bordered by the Los Angeles River, I-5, and State 2.

or make an appointment if need be.

4 P.M. A few doors down at ceramics studio **Cobalt & Clay** (cobaltandclay.com), purchase a day pass to get your fingers dirty on the wheel. Or simply snag handmade items from the gallery shop. Then make your way under Interstate 5 to pick through the vintage wares at **Salvare Goods** (salvaregoods.com).

6 P.M. Located in a former vinyl record storage space, live-music venue **Zebulon** (zebulon.la) is a transplant from Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Whether or not you catch a show, it's the best place in the area to unwind at the end of the day. Nosh on smoked charred eggplant with harissa along with a bourbon-based cocktail like the Way Out West. You've earned it.



PERFECT NIGHT You won't find hotels in Frogtown, but stylish Airbnbs do let you play like a local for an evening. Our pick: a modern loft with a private deck by the river. From \$132; airbnb.com/rooms/18889885.

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TREASURE
HUNT

CLEAN STARTS

Between the season's family get-togethers and holiday parties, taking a few days off to hit restart—mind, body, and soul—sounds pretty ideal. And because the West is home to some of the best hotel spas and wellness resorts in the country (we're looking at you, Arizona), you don't have to travel too far to get your refresh fix. So drop your bags off in any one of these rooms, and get ready to wash away the sins of 2017. —*Mandy Ferreira*

WINTER LIGHT

Nestled in Oregon wine country's Newberg, **The Allison Inn & Spa** has long been a home base for indulgence and fine dining. But in September, the spa debuted a cafe full of healthy eats to keep you going from treatment to treatment—or winery to winery. From \$420/night; theallison.com.

CLASSIC COMEBACK

A hideaway for Hollywood's elite in the 1950s, **Mountain Shadows** in Paradise Valley, Arizona, reopened in April after long, meticulous construction. The massive new wellness center features a stunning gym, moonlight rooftop yoga, and a core class designed for golfers, as well as two pools with views of Camelback Mountain to enjoy while sipping on organic juice. From \$229/night; mountainshadows.com.

THE ULTIMATE APRÈS-SKI

Less than a year old, **The Blake** in New Mexico draws snow hounds with its ski-in/ski-out access to Taos Ski Valley. But you're really at this LEED-certified resort for a couple of New Age massages at its elegant spa. Arrive early to take in the historic Taos Valley photographs in the secluded waiting room. Or relax in the heated outdoor pool and hot tubs that are slated to open this winter. From \$199/night; skitaos.com/theblake.

NATURAL BEAUTY

Wake up at the all-inclusive **Cal-a-Vie Health Spa** with a hike along one of the 11 new trails in Vista, California, before cooling off with a stand-up paddleboard class in the pool. After dinner, stargaze at the new observatory via panoramic big screens or the high-powered telescope. From \$4,275/person; cal-a-vie.com.

ISLAND REJUVENATION

Recently debuted, **The Ritz-Carlton Spa** in Waikiki is steeped in Hawaiian traditions and ingredients, like hot volcanic stones, leaves from Oahu's rain forest, and native lehua blossoms. Revitalize with a full-body sugar scrub made with healing 'olena and a deep lomilomi massage. When you're done, tuck yourself into one of the resort's ocean-view studios. From \$669/night; ritzcarlton.com.

TOTAL REDO

Jonesing for an extreme makeover? In Rancho Santa Fe, California, sign up for **Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa's** just-launched Wellness Collective Retreat—a choose-your-own adventure with more than 95 fitness classes, spa treatments, and one-on-one consultations. But leave time to lounge with a cocktail at the adults-only pool and outdoor bar. You're not a saint, after all. From \$558/night; ranchovalencia.com.

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MOUNTAIN SHADOWS
Paradise Valley, AZ

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Union, WA



RANCHO VALENCIA RESORT & SPA
Rancho Santa Fe, CA



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Coeur d'Alene, ID



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Santa Fe, NM



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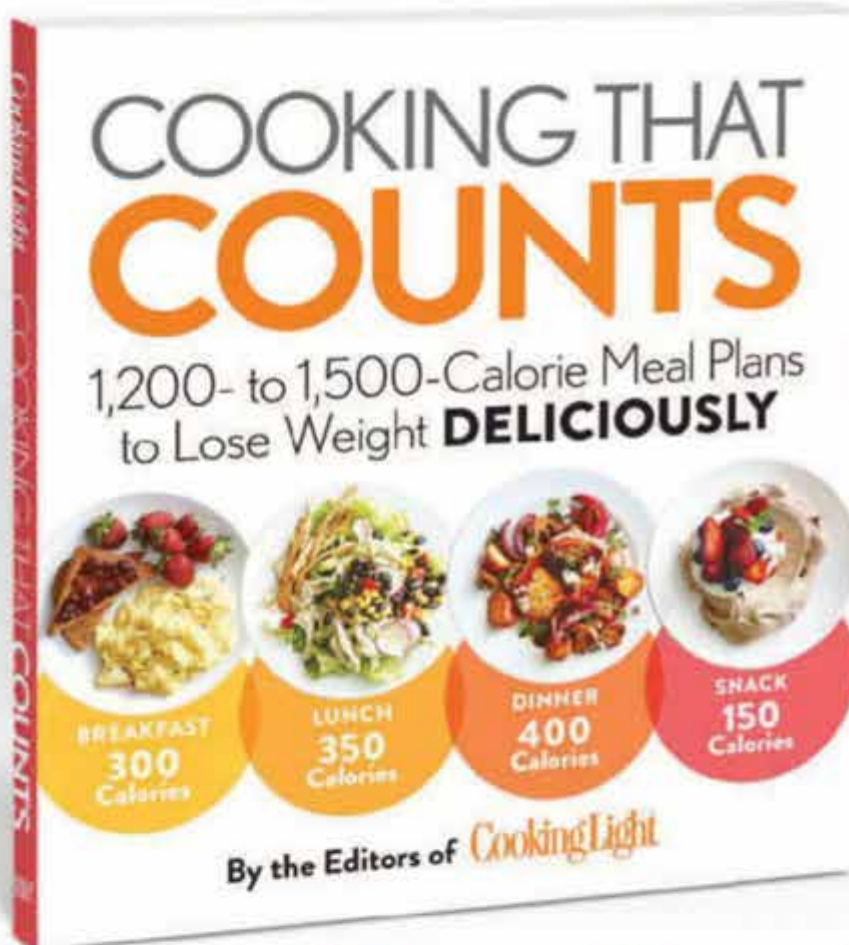
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Home & Garden

GARDEN FRESH

"This is my tropical spin on a traditional holiday wreath," says Harampolis, co-owner of Homestead Design Collective and Studio Choo. Bonus: After the holidays, you can remove the air plants to hang around the home and transplant the red hot poker to your yard.

HOW-TO

Make bundles with evergreen cedar and tea tree (*Melaleuca*) and accents of huckleberry, myrtle, sumac, and variegated ivy; wire to a double-wire wreath frame. Create an organic look by making each bundle different.

SEASONAL
STYLE



THE NEW WREATH

There's more to this winter standby than conifers and bells. Find inspiration in five inventive takes by floral designer Alethea Harampolis.



FOREVER FALL

Crisp air and the crunch of leaves beneath your feet—we can't blame you for wanting to hold onto autumn. This wreath of dried ingredients and warm tones delivers that and more. "For pops of hot color, add flowers from your garden or buy them from the grocery store," says Harampolis.

HOW-TO

Line a dried honeysuckle wreath frame with bunches of this glowing trio: silver banksia, red eucalyptus, and golden panicle hydrangea. Next, wire individual carnations and orchids into dense clusters of color that take cues from your home decor. Use 3M adhesive plastic hooks to hang to a mirror without marring its surface.

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KNOT A WREATH

Although Harampolis admits this piece is more of a “wall hanging than a wreath,” it celebrates the stark and structural beauty of winter—with a budding reminder that spring is just around the corner.

HOW-TO

Using a dark fine-gauge wire, tie a branch of manzanita to a single-wire wreath frame, drape with macramé, and finish with a flowering branch—being careful not to place too much weight on any one side. Once the branch drops its petals, replace with another cutting from your yard—or leave the manzanita and macramé as is for a striking silhouette against a light-colored wall.





LESS IS MORE

Without the distraction of multiple materials, textures, and colors, the sculptural form of this seeded eucalyptus beauty stands out. "I think of it as a combination of a wreath and a swag," says Harampolis.

HOW-TO

Using one continuous piece of wire (don't cut until the wreath is finished to keep ingredients extra snug), tightly wrap eucalyptus bundles of various lengths to a single-wire frame. Hide stems beneath foliage and leave longest bunches for the bottom to create a tear-drop shape. When not in use, hang in a cool, dark place to preserve for years.



MODERN ROMANCE



Harampolis created this wreath with holiday cocktail parties in mind—elegant, but not one bit stuffy. The asymmetrical shape and feathery texture loosen up the classic burgundy, black, and white palette.

HOW-TO

Find a single starting point and create a base of dark leafy branches running both clockwise and counterclockwise. Using a fine-gauge wire, affix bundles of varying lengths to a dried honeysuckle wreath frame, then add clusters of privet berries, lisianthus blossoms, and Israeli ruscus leaves to hide stems and create depth. “Don’t be afraid of negative space,” says Harampolis; gaps and straying branches create a sense of drama.

DIGITAL BONUS: Favorite ways to make your home merry and bright for the season, both indoors and out: sunset.com/holidaydecor. 🍷



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PLANTING
GUIDE



OH, CITRUS TREE

'Tis the season to taste-test and choose the best variety for your yard. *By Mike Irvine*

ALTHOUGH MANY PLANTS are dormant and the days are drizzly, there's one Test Garden chore that always cheers us up this time of year: harvesting citrus. With citrus planting season coming up—around mid-February in mild-winter regions—we're sharing the tips and tricks we've learned from years of growing. And while there's

a variety for every climate or garden size (and even some you can grow indoors), we're highlighting the more exotic types of citrus that have won us over. From finger limes to variegated kumquats, these fruits are both delicious to snack on and perfect in another winter antidote: cocktails.

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TEST GARDEN PICKS

CITRUS
ENVY

Impress your friends and thrill your taste buds with these varieties, recommended by Test Garden designer Stefani Bittner:

AUSTRALIAN FINGER LIME

Known as the caviar or Pop Rocks of citrus, these finger-shaped fruits are filled with juicy capsules that erupt with flavor. Trees are thorny, so plant away from pathways.

'CHINOTTO' SOUR ORANGE

Compact, with glossy myrtle-like leaves, this ornamental tree is elegant in any garden. Sour fruit will make you pucker, but its aromatic rinds are what's missing from your cocktails.

VARIEGATED KUMQUAT

Striped, snack-size fruit ripens orange, but can be eaten skin and all for a juicy sour kick. Cream-tinged leaves are a winner in the landscape.

PEST ALERT!

Clusters of tiny brown insects that feed at a 45° angle are a telltale sign of Asian citrus psyllids; visit saveourcitrus.org. These pests transmit Huanglongbing, an incurable disease that causes green, bitter, and misshapen fruit and can eventually kill the tree outright.



TWO FOR ONE
Decorate with heat-producing, incandescent lights to ward off mild frost.

PROTECT

WINTER LOVE

Citrus trees are sensitive to frost and temperatures below 30°F. In colder regions, always plant in pots and wheel indoors for the winter. In milder climates with occasional frost, move potted citrus next to your house until the spring—reflective surfaces create a warm microclimate. To protect in-ground trees, be sure to deeply water (freezing soil will stress and suck moisture from roots) and cover with a frost blanket before a frigid forecast.

BY THE REGION

BEST IN THE WEST

With a nod to lesser-known varieties, Aaron Dillon, vice president and general manager at Four Winds Growers, has a recommendation for every part of the West (order at fourwindsgrowers.com, our go-to source for citrus trees):

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Australian finger lime, 'Centennial' variegated kumquat, 'Seedless Kishu' mandarin

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Calamondin, 'Gold Nugget' seedless mandarin, 'Rangpur' sour acid mandarin

THE SOUTHWEST

'Fukushu' kumquat, 'Oroblanco' grapefruit, 'Trovita' sweet orange

THE NORTHWEST & MOUNTAIN REGIONS

'Flying Dragon' trifoliate orange, Lime Leaf, yuzu

HOW-TO

POTTED SOLUTIONS

Tight on space? Citrus grow happily in containers with drainage holes in a sunny, warm location in your garden or on a patio. Plant after Valentine's Day or when the danger of frost has passed:



STEP 1 Cut out dead or broken roots and loosen rootball by scraping with a garden knife.



STEP 2 Center tree inside container over a base of lightweight, well-draining potting soil. Avoid pots that are significantly larger than the rootball—excess soil space causes soggy conditions unfavorable to citrus.



STEP 3 Fill in edges with potting soil, tamping as you go. Root crown should sit above soil level. Add a layer of mulch, stake if necessary, and water deeply.

GOT ROOM IN THE GARDEN? In-ground citrus need the same conditions: plenty of heat and sun, plus good drainage.

YOUR CITRUS CARE GUIDE

1 | Water deeply rather than frequently—young trees 2 to 3 times per week to get established, while mature trees need only a weekly soak.

2 | Prune citrus trees for shape around Valentine's Day or after the last frost. Snip suckers growing below the rootstock at any time.

3 | Fertilize with an organic, slow-release granular fertilizer formulated for citrus in late winter or early spring, mid-summer, and early fall.

4 | Mulch with organic materials that decompose and provide nutrients—2 to 4 inches thick and 6 to 12 inches from trunk to prevent rot.

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RECIPE

FINGER LIME VODKA GIMLETS

MAKES 2 DRINKS

4 oz. vodka
2 oz. each regular lime juice and simple syrup
2 finger limes*, cut in half lengthwise

Combine vodka, lime juice, and simple syrup over ice in a cocktail shaker. Shake, then strain into 2 martini glasses. Float a finger lime on each drink.

**Can't find Australian finger limes at the grocery store? Order online from Shanley Farms (shanleyfarms.com).*

RECIPE

VIN D'ORANGE

MAKES 8 TO 12 DRINKS

Vin d'orange is a traditional French wine infusion made with Seville oranges. We've substituted 'Chinotto' sour oranges. Besides on the rocks, the drink can be served straight up as an aperitif, or used in cocktails instead of Lillet or sweet vermouth.

2 bottles (750 ml.) Sancerre or other Sauvignon Blanc
1 cup vodka
1 cup sugar
3 star anise
1 vanilla bean pod, cut in half lengthwise

About 20 'Chinotto' sour oranges, rinsed and thinly sliced crosswise (reserve some to cut into wedges for garnish)

1. Combine wine, vodka, and sugar in a 3-qt. wide-mouth glass jar or ceramic jug, and stir until sugar is dissolved. Add star anise, vanilla bean, and the oranges; stir to mix.
2. Cover tightly, and store in a cool, dark place, stirring occasionally, for a month. Taste (it should have a slightly bitter orange flavor); if you'd like a stronger flavor, let steep for about 10 more days.
3. Strain the vin d'orange twice through several layers of cheesecloth into another jar. Store in the refrigerator.
4. Serve over ice, garnished with orange wedges.

MORE THAN A TWIST

"I want people to think of citrus as more than a garnish," says Stefani Bittner, coauthor of *Harvest* and co-owner of Bay Area landscape design company Homestead Design Collective. With these three recipes, inspired by growing her own citrus trees and adapted with the help of her mother, she has us convinced. Citrus fruit aren't just rinds and slices to be squeezed and discarded—they deserve to be the star of the show.

RECIPE

KUMQUAT KUMBAYA

MAKES 1 DRINK

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
1 tbsp. orange flower water
6 variegated or regular kumquats, quartered lengthwise if large
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. dry gin
1 oz. dry vermouth
1 oz. sweet vermouth
3 dashes each Peychaud's bitters and orange bitters
Kumquat twist

Bring 1 cup water, the sugar, orange flower water, and kumquats to a boil in a small saucepan; boil for about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool, then remove kumquats (discard liquid). For each drink, muddle 1 kumquat in a cocktail shaker. Add gin, dry and sweet vermouths, and both bitters; fill with ice. Shake, then strain into a coupe and garnish with kumquat twist.

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Making spirits bright

Get the kids together, and rock the paper and scissors for these holiday crafts.

By Chantal Lamers

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EASY DIY

Amid the swirl of the holidays, it can be tempting to loosen the rules on your kids' screen time. But mother of three Merrilee Liddiard has another suggestion: Give them a glue stick instead.

"In our fast-paced digital age, I try to encourage creative, nostalgic play," says Liddiard. A doll-maker and the editor of the children's arts and crafts blog Mer Mag (merrileeliddiardshop.com), she recently invited a band of her kids' friends to her Springville, Utah, home for a day of glittery fun. And while Liddiard's known for her modern, magical aesthetic—her Pinterest account can leave the average parent gaping in disbelief—she believes in giving children enough freedom to put their own spin on a project. "Kids always have the coolest ideas," she says. "Let them go for it."



MERRILEE LIDDIARD
WITH THE
HANDMADE DOLLS
SHE CREATES



SPLATTER GIFT WRAP

Kids who excel at making messes will embrace this easy project.

MATERIALS

- Drop cloth
- Thick, solid-color wrapping paper
- Firm toothbrush
- Acrylic craft paint
- Ribbon

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1 Spread drop cloth on floor. Cut a sheet of paper big enough to wrap around your present.

Step 2 Dip tip of brush into paint; use index finger to flick paint from the bristles onto the paper.

Step 3 Let paper dry, wrap gift, and add ribbon.



SANTA ORNAMENT

Inspired by Liddiard's Santa-adoring son Oliver, 9, this cheeky guy can adorn a tree and double as a gift-topper.

MATERIALS

- ▶ Papier-mâché bulb ornament
- ▶ Small paintbrushes
- ▶ Acrylic craft paint
- ▶ Wool felt
- ▶ Low-temp hot glue gun
- ▶ Card stock
- ▶ Butcher's twine

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1 Paint nose and eyes on ornament.

Step 2 Cut felt into a triangle. On the widest side of the triangle, cut a small oval in the center, leaving some fabric above it. Fold down the edge of the felt just barely over the mouth to create a mustache; adhere with hot glue. Add felt eyebrows.

Step 3 Create a template for a cone-shaped hat that children can trace onto card stock, then cut out hat. Tie twine to ornament's existing hanger, measuring to ensure it will extend a few inches beyond the tip of the hat.

Step 4 Thread twine through top of hat, and adhere hat to head with hot glue.

**"I LOVE THINGS THAT
ARE SIMPLE TO
MAKE BUT HAVE A LITTLE
WOW FACTOR."**

— MERRILEE LIDDIARD



MILK CARTON VILLAGE

"Glowing houses seem so cozy and comforting against blustery snowy days," says Liddiard, who came up with this milk carton version to make with her kids.

MATERIALS

- ▶ Varying sizes of milk and cream cartons
- ▶ X-Acto knife
- ▶ Acrylic craft paint, including white
- ▶ Paintbrushes
- ▶ Battery-powered tea lights
- ▶ Accessories like bottle brush trees, woodland creatures, and wooden figurines

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1 Open up top of milk carton, and cut about 2½ inches off the top along the back and sides of it. Leave the front side intact, and cut into a façade design of your choosing.

Step 2 Use a pencil or pen to trace doors, windows, and trim. Parents can use an X-Acto knife to cut.

Step 3 Apply a primer like white paint. Let dry; apply final layer of paint in the color of your choice.

Step 4 Insert tea light and place among trees and figurines.



MAKE IT A PARTY!

In addition to providing supplies for holiday crafts, add a cookie-making station, as well as crayons and doilies so kids can create as they please.

DIGITAL BONUS Watch Liddiard make paper leaf crowns and the other crafts on these pages at sunset.com/kidscrafts.



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NORTHWEST

Your **CHECKLIST**

SHOP

Orchard mason bees and leafcutter bees—gentle natives that are more efficient pollinators than honeybees—are easy to attract. Discover how by reading *Mason Bee Revolution* by Dave Hunter and Jill Lightner (Skipstone; \$16.95).



This pluerry hangs ripe on the tree for six weeks—ample time to pick as you please.

MIKE IRVINE, ASSOCIATE HOME & GARDEN EDITOR



Winter homework

Cold, wet weather means it's time to get outside and plant your deciduous fruit trees. Buy trees bare-root (not in a pot with soil), cutting the trunk down to knee level to control height and promote healthy roots. "It may seem drastic, but that first big cut is essential," says Phil Pursel, a manager at Dave Wilson Nursery. Visit davewilson.com for more planting tips as well as information on different varieties. Our pick? Sweet Treat Pluerry (above), which combines the juiciness of a plum and the candy sweetness of a cherry. 🍷



PLANT

Abundant rain and cooler temperatures make winter a prime time to plant nearly any tree or shrub, and persistent clouds give plants with golden foliage a particularly luminous cast. Try a golden conifer like 'Sekkan-sugi' Japanese cryptomeria, or one of the golden oriental arborvitaes.

For color, plant all kinds of camellias, heaths, hellebores, *Mahonia x media* 'Charity', and winter-blooming viburnums. For fragrance, try daphne, sweet box (*Sarcococca* species), winter-sweet (*Chimonanthus praecox*), and witch hazel (*Hamamelis*).



MAINTAIN

Feed winter-flowering indoor plants (like amaryllis, kalanchoe, moth orchid, ornamental pepper, and paperwhite narcissus) with half-strength liquid fertilizer weekly.

As you prune leafless trees and shrubs, set aside long, slim, buggy-whip branches to weave into a rustic wattle fence. Use bigger branches for fence posts, and long slender ones for the horizontal basket weave.

Long nights and dark days put stress on indoor plants. Keep them near bright windows and out of drafts; give them supplemental plant lights if they start getting thin and leggy.

Winter weeds may be slow growing but they're also persistent. A little hoeing now saves a lot of hand-pulling later.



PROTECT

If you buy a live Christmas tree, hose off insects and dead needles before you bring it inside, and check the container for slugs. Indoors, place the tree on a large waterproof saucer that rests on a double layer of plastic sheeting, raised at the edges. This is the best way to protect your floor.

When heavy wet snow falls, knock it off evergreens before it deforms or breaks their limbs.



Learn what to plant when with our year-round checklists: sunset.com/checklists.

NORTHERN
CALIFORNIA

Your CHECKLIST

**PLANT**

In December, plant bare-root artichokes, arugula seedlings, fava beans, kale, and leaf lettuce, plus garlic and onion sets. Peas and potatoes go in mid-January.

Choose flowering *Camellia japonica* varieties for winter color. These robust shrubs thrive in the understory, out of full sun.

Plant a patch of bare-root blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, or strawberries after the holidays.

The sculptural white blooms of common calla (*Zantedeschia aethiopica*) are easy to grow and make striking cut arrangements. Plant rhizomes now through March in mild-winter areas, but after danger of frost in colder regions.

Buy and plant bare-root roses in January; they're cheaper and the selection is better than in spring. Soak roots in water overnight; then plant where sun shines at least 6 hours per day.

**MAINTAIN**

Lay bark mulch over dirt paths to keep rain from turning them to mud.

Dial down irrigation systems to save water. When it rains, turn irrigation off completely.

Prune deciduous fruit and shade trees after leaves drop. First remove dead, crossing, and



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& GARDEN EDITOR

diseased branches, then prune for shape. Keep fruit trees compact for easy harvest. For large cuts, use a pruning saw; we like Corona's RazorTOOTH 10-inch folding saw (\$30; shop.corona.toolsusa.com).

Prune grandiflora and hybrid-tea roses back to the strongest three to five canes. Remove fallen leaves and refresh mulch around the base of the plants.

Feed citrus trees with granular citrus fertilizer in late January, applying $\frac{1}{4}$ pound of actual nitrogen to each mature tree. Bloom time for many varieties begins in early spring; winter feeding gives trees a boost.

**HARVEST**

Cut branches of holly, juniper, magnolia, pine, and redwood for holiday decor. Take cuttings at different parts of the tree or shrub to keep its shape.

**PROTECT**

Smother overwintering insects by spraying roses and deciduous fruit trees (not citrus) with horticultural oil. Apply when rain is not predicted for the week.



Winter homework

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SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA

Your CHECKLIST

**PLANT**

In December, sow cool-season veggies like chard, cilantro, kale, leeks, lettuce, mustards, green and bulbing onions, parsley, peas, radishes, and spinach. In January, you can plant all these, plus broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower.

Plant bare-root artichokes, asparagus, and rhubarb rhizomes after digging several inches of compost and manure into the soil. Set artichokes and rhubarb at soil level; asparagus crowns need to be 6 inches deep.

Bare-root berries, fruit trees, grapevines, and nut trees can go in as soon as they are available after the holidays.

If your plans include a living Christmas tree, choose a climate-appropriate variety that won't outgrow your landscape. Limit its time indoors to 10 days, placing it away from heating vents and fireplaces. Keep soil moist.

**MAINTAIN**

Divide and replant perennials, including agapanthus, chrysanthemums, coreopsis, English daisies, gloriosa daisies, Shasta daisies, daylilies, delphiniums, dianthus, gazania hybrids, statice, and violets.

Feed winter-blooming shrubs and trees. Dormant plants do not need any fertilizer.



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If azalea and gardenia foliage is yellowish with dark veins, water in a solution of chelated iron.

Prune fruit trees and vines after leaf drop and when there isn't rain in the forecast.

**HARVEST**

Pick outer leaves of overwintering leafy vegetables so the plants continue growing—and you continue harvesting—until spring warmth makes the plants bolt and turn bitter.

Make holiday decorations from the garden: citrus and apples spiked with cloves; rose hip clusters in foliage wreaths; grape and wisteria vines twisted into festive shapes; eucalyptus pods, pinecones, and acorns in magnolia-leaf garlands.

**PROTECT**

Watch the forecast and cover tender plants with frost blankets on the evenings before subfreezing nights.

Periodically rough up soil surfaces to bring overwintering pests and their egg cases to the top, where they'll die of exposure or be eaten by birds.



Winter homework

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SOUTHWEST

Your **CHECKLIST**

PLANT

In low desert, plant deciduous bare-root fruit trees such as apples, apricots, peaches, and plums. Choose low-chill varieties. For warmest winter locations, try 'Dorsett Golden' and 'Pink Lady' apples; 'Cot-N-Candy' apriums; 'Midpride' peaches; and 'Burgundy' plums.

In the low and mid-elevation desert, set out transplants of calendula, cyclamen, dianthus, Johnny-jump-up, pansy, petunia, poppies, snapdragon, and sweet alyssum. Plant in pots of fast-draining soil mix.

As soon as they become available, plant asparagus crowns, bare-root blackberries ('Brisson', 'Rosborough', and 'Womack' excel in low desert), and grapes (try 'Flame', 'Muscat', and 'Thompson Seedless' in low desert).

In mid-elevation areas set out transplants of kohlrabi through the end of December; lettuce and onion through January. In low-desert areas, sow collards, green onions, kale, lettuce, and Swiss chard through December; and chives, dill, and fennel through January. Transplant brussels sprouts and sweet peas in the garden through December.

Tender and spicy Asian greens can be planted now for cut-and-come-again harvest through spring. Look for komatsuna,



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mizuna, and tatsoi. All can be eaten fresh or sautéed.

In January, start peppers and tomatoes indoors for transplant into the garden in March.



HARVEST

Pick olives, green or black, depending on preference, and cure using an easy salt-based brine. For tips to cure at home, go to desertharvesters.org.

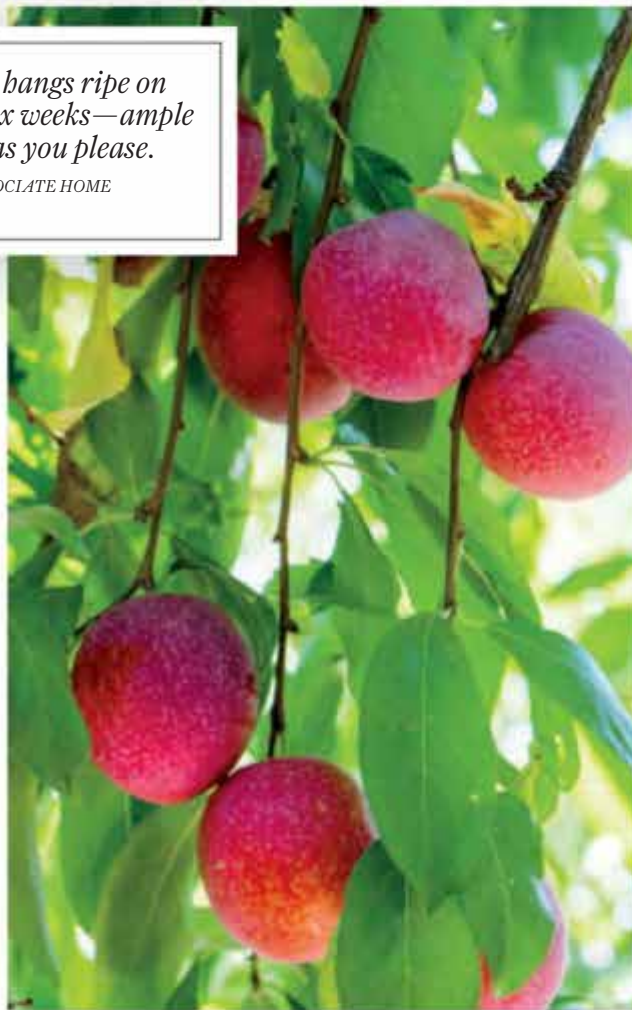


MAINTAIN

Smother the eggs of aphids, mites, and scale insects by spraying dormant oil (find online or at your local nursery) on branches and trunks of deciduous fruit trees.

As weather cools, increase the number of days between watering, but maintain the length of each irrigation cycle. Most established landscape plants only need a drink once or twice monthly in winter.

When hard freezes are forecast, place large Styrofoam cups over the growing tips of cold-sensitive columnar cactus such as totem pole, Mexican fence post, and organpipe.



Winter homework

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ROCKY
MOUNTAINSYour **CHECKLIST**

PLANT

Grow your own sprouts with Botanical Interests Seed Sprouter (\$24.95; botanicalinterests.com). Try alfalfa, broccoli, buckwheat, clover, cress, mustard, and radish, plus most beans, green peas, lentils, and snow peas.

Star-shaped succulent *Haworthia* varieties are perfect for holiday table arrangements. Hide nursery pots inside silver containers. Water twice monthly.

Pot up purple shamrock bulbs (*Oxalis triangularis papilionacea* 'Atropurpurea') in December for foliage in time for St. Patrick's Day. Plant 1 1/4 inches deep and 3 inches apart in a peat-based mix.

Try dramatic 4-inch-tall Agave 'Cream Spike' in a windowsill garden. Yellow-edged rosettes offset readily and fill in around the parent plant.

Grow containers of mint on a sunny windowsill, using fresh sprigs for cooking, as garnishes, and to make tea. Mint is available in many different flavors—look for apple, chocolate, ginger, and pineapple, as well as peppermint and spearmint.



MAINTAIN

After soil freezes, prevent root-damaging freeze/thaw cycles by covering landscape beds with 5 inches of loose hay, straw, pine needles, fallen



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leaves, or commercial forest mulch. Water to keep mulch from blowing away.

Prevent snow mold on lawns by raking up fallen leaves.

Water recent plantings, checking rootballs (not surrounding soil) for moisture. Soak those that feel dry.

Get a jump on spring by getting chain saws, chipper-shredders, mowers, blowers, tillers, and string trimmers tuned up and blades replaced or sharpened. Look for a shop that does small engine maintenance and repair.

During mild spells when soil is unfrozen, pull large-rooted fall and winter weeds like dandelions, mallow, myrtle spurge, salsify, and Scotch thistle.



CREATE

Assemble a garland with evergreen trimmings of arborvitae, Arizona cypress, fir, juniper, pine, or spruce. Tie 6- to 8-inch bunches to a rope using florist's wire, overlapping slightly. Accent with pinecones, fragrant herbs, or fruit.

*Winter homework*

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**SONOMA
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WINEGROWERS



WHEN THE COAST IS CLEAR

by
LAUREN LADOCÉOUR
photographs by
THOMAS J. STORY

After a series of landslides and storms, Big Sur found itself blocked off from the rest of the world. And those who call it home suddenly had one of California's most scenic destinations all to themselves.



PROP STYLING: EMMA STAR JENSEN

Left: Big Sur's craggy cliffs. Right: Ventana Big Sur's glampground, which opened in October.

S

COTT AND MOLLY

Moffat were down to their last cans of sardines and crackers. With the roads

leading to the nearest stores blocked, the young couple needed to figure out how to keep their three children, pets, and horses fed. And fast. “We were close to running out of food,” says Scott, a scruffy Big Sur native and carpenter who moved back here five years ago with Molly. “So we grabbed our backpacks and started bushwhacking our way out.” The kids stayed with a friend, and their parents returned after a daylong trek with 120 pounds of shelf items and produce. “Lesson learned: Always have a month’s worth of food on hand,” says Scott. “And build out a vegetable garden.”

This happened in March, weeks after the crumbling Pfeiffer Canyon Bridge to the north officially closed, dividing the coastal hamlet of Big Sur in two. Throughout the winter, a series of landslides had rendered parts of Highway 1 a few miles to the south unsafe to drive. It was a one-two punch that effectively severed the bottom half of the town from stores, schools, medicine, and mail service. With no access in or out, Big Sur’s south side had become an island of sorts, one with an empty Highway 1 running down its spine. And stranded at the top of a ridgeway were the Moffatts.

Their 400-or-so neighbors were in much the same position, having already emptied out the local deli and the walk-in fridges of the restaurants where many of them worked. Smaller roads leading into residential areas, like the dirt one-way that the Moffatts would normally take from their home down to the main highway, were impassable, thanks to a streak of record-breaking rains and felled trees. “In the beginning, it was actually fun and sweet. There was no traffic, it was quiet, and the wildlife really came out of the backwoods,”

says Molly, a petite horse trainer with a singsongy voice. “But when people started running out of their supplies, they got a little bit anxious about when the next meal’s going to come in.”

CARVED AMONG its dramatic cliffs, booming surf, and thick redwoods, Big Sur has long inspired writers and a stream of visitors

taking roadside selfies. The community, which has sheltered no more than 1,000 permanent residents at a time since artists, ranchers, and solitude seekers began settling here, has also been the stage for gob-smacking fires and slides for most of its modern history. In fact, the town has seen regular highway closures every few years since it was completed in 1937. But for those



Scott and Molly Moffat with their three kids, Scarlet, 7, Tiger Lily, 2, and Roman, 5.



who live here, and visitors like me who come through, it is paradise.

I've spent the better part of a decade making the trek from the Bay Area—to camp, tune in and drop out at yoga retreats, or to just immerse myself in the trees and then sneak up to the Big Sur Bakery. Watching the marine layer burn off, I've spent mornings here dreaming up plans to make a permanent move. But every time I hear news of another megastorm or devastating fire striking the area, that fantasy jolts to a halt.

These past few months have been extreme even by longtime residents' standards. With parts of Highway 1 and Nacimiento-Fergusson Road (the only public road that winds through the mountains east to west) closed for a time, helicopters flew in to rescue residents and some lingering vacationers, and food air-drops followed. The posh hotels that make up most of the economy here—like Ventana Big Sur and Deetjen's Big Sur Inn—had to go on sabbatical. And some of the residents and workers who commuted from coastal communities from the north cut bait. Those who remained have spent the better part of 2017 rebuilding the community, its roads, and the hotels.

Though no official numbers have been tallied yet, early estimates note \$300,000 lost every day to the local economy since the "island" formed. Couples who were once separated by just a few miles suddenly found themselves in long-distance relationships. And families with children were forced to leave their homes and crash with friends on the north end so kids could attend school.

"It's put a lot of things in perspective," says Molly, noting that while what happened in Big Sur by no means compares to the Mother Nature-led destruction that's hit Puerto Rico, Texas, and California Wine Country this year, it has given her a taste of what it's like to be stranded. "It's made me think a lot about the millions of people who have trouble getting food and supplies right now. It's insane."

IN THE PROCESS OF TRYING to knit life back to normal again, the south siders have created a new kind of Big Sur, one where residents ride bikes and horses on a shockingly empty highway and rely on each other like never before. "If Big Sur ever needed a detox, she got it," says Jamie Siebold, a special projects manager at Ventana who stayed on to rebuild the resort's campground after a creek washed it away. "For the past few months, we've had it to ourselves. I'm not going to lie: It's been pretty nice."

By the end of February, most businesses on the south side of the bridge and all but one resort had gone on hiatus. Transportation officials worked to clear the eastward entrance of Nacimiento-Fergusson Road, and dozens of locals alongside workers from California State Parks and the American Conservation Experience began etching a steep mile-long trail out to the north end of the downed bridge. Even by the fall, during my first visit to the area since the devastation, the trail was still serving as the community's main thoroughfare.

Throughout the week, Steve Mayer, whose family owns the Big Sur Taphouse and Deli on the south side, takes turns with his employees doing the hike to the north so they can load up a 105-liter bag with newspapers, ice cream, and whatever else is needed to stock the south side's only general store. "Sunday is no fun," says 27-year-old Mayer, who only gets a few days off to go home to his wife in Monterey. "Sunday is newspaper day, and those papers are the heaviest."

Over a beer one afternoon, Mayer takes a break from behind the taps and lets me try on the bag, which is nearly as tall as he is when it's fully stuffed. Nope, I think, no way, no how—I'd topple over on the final ascent. "You do what you got to do," he says, returning to his place behind the bar to serve a couple of longtime residents who've come in for fish tacos.

For others, such as Heather and Marcus Foster, the trail was a path for return. After the bridge closed, the couple made the tough decision to split up—she took the kids to a friend's home up north, where their school was, while he stayed behind to continue looking after the ranch. A month after the trail debuted, the family reunited in the south, and the Fosters began their weekday ritual of taking the kids to the trailhead to school. "When I came back, it just felt deserted," says Heather. "On the north side, everything was changing and reopening. And on this side, it was like, screech! All the pullouts were full of dirt. I was like, did we do the right thing coming back?"

BY THE END OF SPRING, with plans to reopen the southern highway entrance in the works, the community was, in its own way, energized. Destination-restaurant Nepenthe was in business again (albeit serving 30 meals a day instead of 300 to locals and

"In the beginning, it was actually fun and sweet. There was no traffic, it was quiet, and the wildlife really came out of the backwoods,"

says Molly Moffat.

intrepid tourists who took the Nacimiento-Fergusson Road in). At Ventana Big Sur, the chef worked out a deal to have ingredients delivered to the resort via that same winding road—10 miles of which can take up to one hour to drive—in order to feed the workers helping renovate the hotel. And locals had gotten resourceful. A couple of guys improvised a CrossFit gym using a drill rig, while Scott Moffat transformed felled trees into flooring and furniture for homes that were being rebuilt.

With the post office still closed, an engineering crew delivered a few residents' mail to the deli, using a private road they maintained (they were thanked with six-packs). And another company began offering electric bike rentals as a way to ride 20 miles of the now-quiet coastline road. Some people rode naked.


In many ways, it was Big Sur as it used to be—or at least the way author Henry Miller painted it in *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch*, the 1957 book that attracted writers like Jack Kerouac with its descriptions of a community that was equally scrappy, collaborative, and creative in how it made day-to-day life work on the edge of the world.

Then in May, with earth-shaking gusto, another landslide at Mud Creek, farther south of the already blocked-off road, buried Highway 1 in a million tons of unsettled earth. The California Department of Transportation estimates that section of the highway, which will need to be rebuilt before it can once again serve as Big Sur's lower access point, won't be ready until the end of this coming summer, at the earliest.

That, coupled with several delays in the new bridge construction to the north, should have solidified the south end's landlocked status. But over the summer, the community bypass trail opened to the public, bringing with it an increase of tourists and road cyclists hiking up with their wheels over their shoulders, hoping to see how far down the highway they could get. In response, the Henry Miller Memorial Library, which had set up a temporary storefront in Carmel, began turning on the lights

Rancho Grande,
taken from the deck at Nepenthe.





In many ways, it was Big Sur as it used to be ...
a community that was equally scrappy,
collaborative, and creative in how it made day-to-
day life work on the edge of the world.

during the week back in its original location; Deetjen's devised plans to rebuild the cabins that fell during storms; and Ventana put the finishing touches on its glampground nestled in a lush redwood canyon.

Word had gotten out online about the new trail allowing visitors to access the island. And, yes, I was one of them, taking 20 minutes to do the walk and counting one tourist for every dozen or so locals I encountered along the way. It was clear who the outsiders were: We were all a little sweatier, a little more unsure of the way than those who follow the trail on a regular basis.

Not all the locals were eager to see us. One afternoon, when I came across a roadside pullout where a set of local 20-somethings were parked and taking in the view, a sense of territorialism peaked. "Twenty dollars for a picture. Twenty-five! Forty-five!" snarked one man sitting with his friend in the bed of a pickup. They were covered in a thin layer of mud they'd presumably found in an in-the-know clay deposit by a natural spring not too far off. Classic acid rock pumped through the speakers, and their bodies danced like shadows against the late-day light. "I'm sorry. I don't mean to be a jerk, but this is the one time we get this place to ourselves. Can we have this moment?"

At first I was taken aback. But then, I thought, can I blame them? Big Sur is a place for those who love untouched beauty and know how to be at the mercy of it. And for the better part of this past year, it's been something of a reserve for those who can.

"It's a lot like it was 20 years ago now, where you'd go into a store and see your neighbors. There's creativity in coming together," says Scott Moffat, who has since planted a garden full of watermelon, peas, squash, herbs, and tomatoes in case of the next months-long isolation. "People from the outside may look in and say it's really beautiful or it's really tragic, but what they don't see is the in-between. We're thriving."

Clockwise, from top left: Ventana's roasted carrots; The Sur House executive chef Paul Corsentino; Ventana's glampground bathhouse; Big Sur Tap-house's Steve Mayer; the meadow at Ventana; Scott and Tiger Lily Moffat.





To Sur, with love

Pfeiffer Canyon Bridge reopened in mid-October, freeing up the south-bound route into town from Monterey. To get the most up-to-date information on the bridge and future road closures, check [sunset.com/bigsurclosure](https://www.sunset.com/bigsurclosure) and [dot.ca.gov](https://www.dot.ca.gov). Once you're there, be sure to hit these favorite spots.

EAT

At the Big Sur Taphouse, go straight for the spicy fish tacos and a pint or two of sour beer. (You'll most likely be trading rounds with your bar mates anyway.) [bigsurtaphouse.com](https://www.bigsurtaphouse.com).

STAY

You don't really need to pack much for a night at Ventana Big Sur's new super-luxe glampsites. Safari-style tents come with a plush bed, a gas-and-wood firepit, electricity, maps, and walking sticks for exploring the area's trails and creeks. (Bonus: Guests can use the resort's Japanese bathhouse and pools!) From \$325; [ventanabigsur.com](https://www.ventanabigsur.com).

SHOP

The Henry Miller Memorial Library has long drawn artists and Miller fans to its simple wooden cabin, filled with his complete works. Its backyard stage has seen the likes of Neil Young and Cat Power through the popular folkYEAH! concert series. [henrymiller.org](https://www.henrymiller.org).

EXPLORE

About 6 miles south of Nepenthe restaurant is the Partington Cove trailhead. The 15-minute hike takes you through a redwood canyon to a rocky beach and into a tunnel, where on the other side is the sunset-worthy beach cove. [bigsurcalifornia.org](https://www.bigsurcalifornia.org).





H

THE PARTY WHISPERER

BY MARGO TRUE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DYLAN + JENI

**SUSAN
MACTAVISH
BEST KNOWS
WHAT MAKES
A GOOD
HOLIDAY
BASH—AND
IT'S NOT
PERFECTION.**





PULLED BRISKET SANDWICHES



AT A SUSAN MACTAVISH BEST party, you might find yourself squeezed in the hallway next to a venture capitalist, or a trombone player, or a neuroscientist, deep in an unexpected conversation. Or maybe you're in the dining room, helping yourself to a vast spread of food—beef tenderloin, smoked trout, roasted pork, tapenade. Or in the living room, sprawled on a sheepskin, listening to a musical performance or a talk on genetics or the history of Scotch whisky. You leave with business cards and phone numbers and new ideas, merrier than when you arrived.

At least twice a month, here at her San Francisco townhouse and at her loft in New York, Best hosts 50 to 125 people—all with, she says, “a minimum of fuss.” As founder of a lifestyle brand, Living MacTavish, and a PR company, Best Public Relations, she creates these modern-day salons for her clients (software start-ups and politicians among them), slipping them into the swirl of guests to meet and make connections. Tall and slender, Best has the aristocratic look of Cate Blanchett, but has an endearingly goofy side that instantly puts her guests at ease. Her art lies in creating an environment that ignites a spark in everyone who comes.

How does she pull that off? First, the guest list. “I like it to be as eclectic as possible—that’s where the excitement and fun is. When you introduce a filmmaker to a surgeon, you never know what might happen. I like the ages to be as different as possible too.” She enjoys seeing a 20-something techie hit it off with an 80-something psychoanalyst. “And I love piling people up.” She invites so many people that they’re brushing up against each other. They forget to look at their phones and end up talking instead.

The ambience is key too. There’s more than a tinge of glamour in Best’s background—a Scottish castle, a father who served in Canada’s parliament, a famous grandfather (Charles Best, co-inventor of insulin)—and her house is filled with antiques. Yet the setting feels playful and cozy. She sets out lab beakers instead of glasses. A stuffed toy frog tops her Christmas tree. Paintings don’t hang straight, plates don’t match, and there are never enough chairs, so most people end up on the floor or leaning against a wall. It’s a gentle way to disrupt her high-powered guests. “You leave your pretensions at the door,” she says.

Then there’s the food, a staggering outpouring that’s designed to get people a little bit messy and relaxed—juicy roasted carrots picked up straight off the platter, crumbly walnut meringues, cocktails you pour yourself. Best produces it all from a tiny kitchen, an extra fridge downstairs, and a beat-up backyard grill, using easy recipes that pack a lot of flavor and can



EVENING AT ANGORA COCKTAIL



be made ahead. But she also likes to cook as people arrive, because it livens things up and sends enticing aromas through the house.

These touches of theater and surprise and ease make all the difference. “We can get so bogged down in the minutiae of every day, and so much good comes out of breaking the routine,” she says. “And our lives are so imperfect... how do you encourage people to come together and not need to be perfect?” It’s a question she answers with every party she throws.



Preceding pages: Best’s holiday table in San Francisco; the host herself. Left, from top: The living-room fireplace adds cozy light and cheer; Best with her English cocker spaniel, Islay, the mellowest of party animals. Above: Guests spill into the hallway, listening to music from the living room.



ROAST RACK
OF LAMB
WITH
LAVENDER

“
SO MUCH
GOOD COMES
OUT OF
BREAKING
THE ROUTINE
”

THE RECIPES THAT FOLLOW ALL SERVE 50 AS PART OF A PARTY MENU. SOME OF THEM (LIKE THE BRISKET SANDWICHES) MAKE MORE SERVINGS THAN OTHERS, SINCE THEY'RE GENERALLY MORE POPULAR.

AN EVENING AT ANGORA

MAKES 4 QTS. / 30 MINUTES

On the twin lakes at Angora, located on the south shore of Lake Tahoe, lies a comfortable family-owned resort that Best loves, there since the 1920s. It's a good spot to watch the sunset, the colors of which she distilled into this cocktail. A tip: Squeeze fresh juice days or weeks ahead and freeze it. • Put $2\frac{1}{4}$ cups **Seville (bitter orange) marmalade**, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup **honey**, and 3 cups **freshly squeezed lemon juice** in a large pot with $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups **water** and heat over medium heat, stirring every now and then, until marmalade is melted. Stir in $1\frac{1}{2}$ bottles (750 ml. each) **blended Scotch whisky** and 3 qts. **bottled orange juice**. Pour into decanters or pitchers and serve with a stirring spoon on the side, since the marmalade sinks. Set out with glasses, **ice**, and **fresh orange slices** or delicate dried orange slices (find at gourmet stores and Trader Joe's) to float in the glass.

MAKE AHEAD *Chilled, up to 1 week; up to 3 months, frozen (if you use a glass jar, fill to 2 inches below lid so it won't explode).*

PER $\frac{1}{4}$ -CUP SERVING 135 Cal., 1% (2 Cal.) from fat; 0.6 g protein; 0.2 g fat (0 g sat.); 22 g carbo (0.3 g fiber); 9.6 mg sodium; 0 mg chol.

THE POINT LOBOS

MAKES 6 QTS. / 10 MINUTES

Best has a house near Point Lobos, south of Carmel, and she

goes to the beach every evening she's there. This cocktail evokes the golden, slightly foggy view.

• In a saucepan, heat $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups **freshly squeezed lemon juice** and 1 cup packed **light brown sugar** over medium heat until sugar dissolves. Let cool if you have time (if not, just proceed), then combine in a large pitcher or jar with 5 cups **bourbon**, 10 cups **unfiltered apple cider**, 5 cups **Calvados**, and 2 tbsp. **bitters** (apple, cherry, or Angostura). Just before serving, thinly slice an **apple** and float on the top if you like, and set out with glasses and **ice**.

MAKE AHEAD *Cocktail without apple slices, up to 1 week, chilled; up to 3 months, frozen (if you use a glass jar, fill to 2 inches below lid so it won't explode).*

PER $\frac{1}{4}$ -CUP SERVING 155 Cal., 0% (0.3 Cal.) from fat; 0 g protein; 0 g fat; 12 g carbo (0 g fiber); 4 mg sodium; 0 mg chol.

BLACK OLIVE TAPENADE

MAKES 3 CUPS / 30 MINUTES

"Tapenade is a great thing to have in your fridge over the holidays for drop-in guests, for slathering on everything from sandwiches of leftovers to a roast," says Best. She often stores her tapenade in glass jars, so it can be served straight from the fridge. As for the quail eggs, "don't put out 50, that would be silly," she says. "They're a talking point, really, they give folks a reason to speak to each other. And I certainly don't peel them—too much work! Guests peel them."

TAPENADE

9 garlic cloves
8 cups pitted Kalamata olives,
drained and rinsed
3 cans (2 oz. each) anchovies,

drained

$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups extra-virgin olive oil
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup jarred brined capers,
brine squeezed out (with your
hands or press in a strainer)
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 tsp. red chile flakes
3 tbsp. brandy
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. freshly ground pepper
 $2\frac{1}{4}$ cups each lightly packed
torn fresh basil leaves and
flat-leaf parsley leaves

TO SERVE

Endive leaves, mini bell pepper
halves, and steamed broccolini
Baguette toasts
Hardcooked quail eggs*

Put garlic in a food processor and whirl to mince. Add remaining ingredients and pulse into a chunky purée.

*To boil quail eggs, put eggs in a pot with water to cover by 2 in. Bring to a boil, then simmer 5 minutes. Drain eggs and transfer to a bowl of ice water to cool.

MAKE AHEAD *Tapenade, up to a month, chilled. Vegetables (except endive, which tend to brown so prep a couple of hours beforehand) and eggs, 1 day, chilled.*

PER 2-TBSP. SERVING OF TAPENADE 311 Cal., 89% (277 Cal.) from fat; 2.5 g protein; 31 g fat (2 g sat.); 5 g carbo (0.5 g fiber); 1,325 mg sodium; 6 mg chol. GF

SMOKED TROUT PÂTÉ

MAKES 6 CUPS / 10 MINUTES

"So festive! When I was a kid, my mother would buy the fish at Fortnum & Mason on our way back to America and make me carry it in my suitcase in case we got stopped at customs," Best says. These days smoked trout is available just about anywhere, and this spread is very easy. "You can make this in 10 minutes. Anyone has 10 minutes!" Serve with crackers.

2 fillets smoked trout ($\frac{1}{2}$ lb.),
skin removed, trout broken
into chunks
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cream cheese
2 tbsp. mayonnaise
Juice and zest of $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon, plus
more to taste
1 tbsp. cream-style prepared
horseradish
1 bunch green onions (5 or 6),
finely chopped
2 tbsp. jarred brined capers,
brine squeezed out
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. freshly ground pepper

Put all ingredients in a food processor and pulse until just mixed (it's nice a little chunky).

MAKE AHEAD *Up to 1 week, chilled.*

PER 2-TBSP. SERVING 18 Cal., 61% (11 Cal.) from fat; 1.5 g protein; 1.2 g fat (0.4 g sat.); 0.3 g carbo (0 g fiber); 17 mg sodium; 5 mg chol. LC/LS

ROAST RACK OF LAMB with LAVENDER

MAKES ABOUT 25 CHOPS / 40 MINUTES

"I roast these early in the evening and pass them around straight out of the oven. It's a reward to the early arrivals," says Best.

3 racks of lamb (about 6 lbs. total), at room temperature
About 7 tbsp. grapeseed or sunflower oil, divided
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
3 to 6 tbsp. dried culinary lavender buds



Clockwise from top left: Labeling food and drink eliminates confusion; Best in her family's clan MacTavish tartan; quiet sparks; fun in full swing.



SMOKED TROUT PÂTÉ



INVERNESS SUNSET COCKTAIL



BACON-WRAPPED FILLET OF BEEF

INVERNESS SUNSET

MAKES 4½ QTS. / ABOUT 1 HOUR

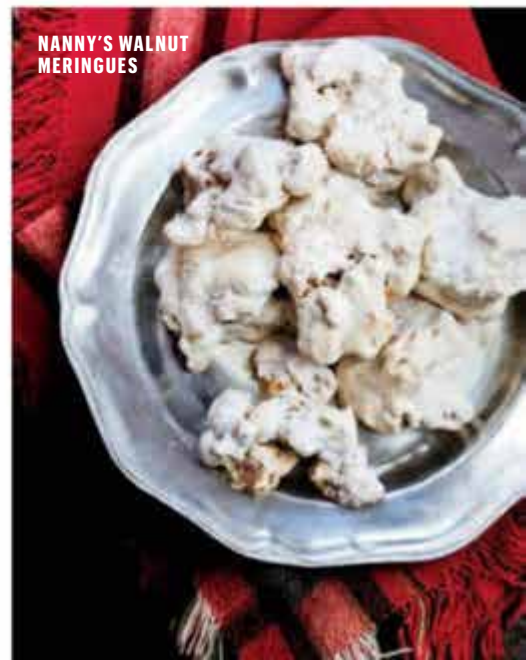
Chill all the ingredients before mixing, since this gently fizzy cocktail is meant to be served straight up. Best named it for the purplish skies over the coastal town of Inverness in Northern California. • Make rosemary simple syrup: In a small saucepan, combine 2 cups **sugar** with 1 cup **water** and 2 **large fresh rosemary sprigs**. Cover and bring to a boil, then let steep off the heat 15 minutes, covered. Remove rosemary and chill syrup. In a large jar or bowl, mix 6 cups well-chilled **standard gin** such as Tanqueray or Seagram's, 1½ cups **freshly squeezed chilled lemon juice**, and ¾ cups **chilled pomegranate juice** with 1½ cups rosemary simple syrup. Right before serving, add 6 cups **chilled sparkling rosé**. Pour into a decanter or pitcher and tie rosemary sprig around the handle or neck.

MAKE AHEAD *Simple syrup or cocktail itself (without sparkling wine) up to 1 week, chilled; up to 3 months, frozen.*

PER ½-CUP SERVING 112 Cal., 0% (0.2 Cal.) from fat; 0.2 g protein; 0 g fat; 9.5 g carbo (0 g fiber); 3.8 mg sodium; 0 mg chol.



**SLOW-ROASTED
PORK BELLY**



**NANNY'S WALNUT
MERINGUES**

1. Preheat oven to 425°. Pat lamb dry with paper towels, then rub with 2 tbsp. or so of oil. Season all over with salt and pepper, then coat meaty sides lavishly with lavender buds, pressing them in.
2. Heat $\frac{1}{4}$ cup oil in a large frying pan (not nonstick) over medium-high heat. Sear lamb on all sides, one rack at a time and pressing into pan to help lavender stay on, about 2 minutes per side. Use more oil if you need to.
3. Put all racks into pan, meat side up, and roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted in thickest part registers 140° (for medium rare), 15 to 20 minutes.
4. Move racks to a cutting board, tent with foil, and let rest 5 to 10 minutes. Slice into chops. Arrange on a platter and finish with a generous sprinkle of salt and pepper.

PER CHOP 122 Cal., 53% (64 Cal.) from fat; 14 g protein; 7 g fat (1.9 g sat.); 0 g carbo (0 g fiber); 52 mg sodium; 40 mg chol. GF/LC/LS

RUM and HONEY-ROASTED CAYENNE-CUMIN CARROTS

MAKES 50 / 1½ HOURS

Best serves these with their stalks still on so people can use their fingers. “They’re sweet, hot, salty, and juicy,” she says. “They are very popular. And

wallet-friendly!” You can substitute the rum and maple syrup with tequila and agave or bourbon and honey.

50 medium carrots with green tops (about 6½ lbs.)

1 cup dark rum (or bourbon, or even tequila)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup each maple syrup (or molasses, agave, or honey) and extra-virgin olive oil

1½ to 2 tsp. cayenne

1 tbsp. ground cumin

About 1 tbsp. kosher salt

1 cup each crumbled feta cheese and chopped cilantro

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup lemon juice

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup honey

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Trim carrot greens to about 2 inches, then scrub or peel carrots and heap in 2 rimmed baking sheets. Mix rum, maple syrup, and oil and pour over carrots. Mix cayenne, cumin, and 1 tbsp. salt, sprinkle over carrots, and turn them with your hands so everything gets distributed. Divide among 4 rimmed baking pans in a single layer.
2. Roast carrots (in two batches if you have one oven) until thoroughly tender and browned, 45 to 50 minutes depending on how big they are. Roll them over halfway through to brown evenly. If the pan starts getting dry, splash in $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water.
3. Heap a layer of carrots on a rimmed serving platter. Scatter half of feta over them, then half of cilantro. Add the remaining carrots, then drizzle with juices from pan. Mix lemon, honey, and salt to taste and drizzle that on too. Sprinkle with the rest of the feta and cilantro.

MAKE AHEAD *Roasted carrots, up to 1 day, chilled (bring them to room temperature before serving), or a few hours ahead and kept at room temperature. Arrange on platter with toppings shortly before serving.*

PER CARROT 83 Cal., 34% (28 Cal.) from fat; 1 g protein; 3 g fat (0.8 g sat.); 11 g carbo (1.8 g fiber); 186 mg sodium; 2.7 mg chol. GF/LC/LS/V

SLOW-ROASTED PORK BELLY

MAKES ABOUT 30 PIECES / 3 TO 3½ HOURS

“No matter how much you make, it will be eaten,” says Best of these rich, juicy-crisp chunks. “It’s a fairly forgiving dish time-wise, so it’s great to have cooking as your guests arrive. And the smell, so welcoming.”

1 rindless pork belly (6 to 7 lbs. without rind), cut lengthwise into 1½-in.-wide strips*

1 to 2 tbsp. kosher salt

3 tbsp. toasted sesame oil

3 tbsp. Chinese-style hot pepper oil, or any East Asian chili garlic sauce or pepper paste such as Sriracha

1. Preheat oven to 450°. Liberally sprinkle pork all over with salt.
2. Put pork in a large roasting pan (crowding is okay). Coat all over with toasted sesame oil, then with hot pepper oil.
3. Roast for about 20 minutes. Then reduce to 350° and roast 2 to 2½ hours, periodically pouring off fat (have a heatproof bowl handy for this), until pork belly is crisp on top but still juicy within.
4. Serve the strips on a large wooden cutting board. Chop

a couple of them into bite-size pieces to convey the idea, and serve with a knife so everyone can cut their own chunks.

* Whole Foods Market sells pork belly already cut into strips.

MAKE AHEAD *Up to 3 days, reheated at 350° for 15 minutes.*

PER PIECE 533 Cal., 92% (493 Cal.) from fat; 9.2 g protein; 55 g fat (19 g sat.); 0 g carbo (0 g fiber); 223 mg sodium; 71 mg chol.

PULLED BRISKET SANDWICHES with SESAME SLAW

MAKES 60 / 1½ HOURS, PLUS AT LEAST 3½ HOURS TO COOK

Guests tend to gobble these up late at night, says Best, so you want a lot of them. Serve a batch earlier in the evening and the rest later. “The sandwiches should look *abundant*, just like the evening,” she adds. “If vegetarians are coming, make some sandwiches with slices of baked tofu. It’s usually seasoned and often smoky and good.”

BRISKET

8 lbs. beef brisket

2 tbsp. kosher salt

1½ tsp. each cinnamon, ground cumin, ground ginger, and freshly ground pepper

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. hot smoked paprika

4 to 5 cups strong black coffee
60 slider rolls

BARBECUE SAUCE

6 cups ketchup

1 cup each molasses and apple cider vinegar

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup vinegar-based hot pepper sauce or Tabasco

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Worcestershire sauce

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cayenne

2 tsp. hot smoked paprika

⌘

Clockwise from top right: Friendly pileup outside the dining room and kitchen; dressed for the occasion; Best reads a “Missed Connections” post from Craigslist to the throng (several guests follow with readings of their own).

SESAME SLAW

1 ½ lbs. each red cabbage and carrots, coarsely shredded (or two 10-oz. pre-shredded bags of each)

About 1 cup coarsely chopped cilantro leaves and stems

3 tbsp. toasted sesame seeds

About 1 ½ tsp. kosher salt

½ cup plus 1 tbsp. unseasoned rice vinegar

4 tsp. honey

1 ½ tbsp. toasted sesame oil

About 3 cups mayonnaise

1. Braise the brisket: About an hour before cooking, take brisket out of the fridge. Score long, shallow slashes about 1 in. apart on the fat side with a sharp knife (just down to the meat), then score in the opposite direction to crosshatch. Sprinkle meat on both sides with salt. Mix spices together, then sprinkle and rub all over brisket. Pre-heat oven to 250°.

2. Put brisket in a roasting pan just big enough to hold it and pour in enough coffee to come halfway up the sides. Cover tightly with foil.

3. Roast brisket about 8 hours, depending on weight (about 1 hour per lb.). If you're in a hurry, cook at 375° for 3 ½ to 4 hours. When it's done, you should be able to put a fork all the way through it and pull the meat apart easily. If you can't, it's not done. "The smell really drives the dog mad overnight," says Best. Remove from oven and let cool until you can touch it.

4. Make barbecue sauce: Whisk all ingredients in a large bowl. Adjust seasonings to taste.

5. Put meat on a cutting board and pull into long shreds with two forks. Cut into bite-size shreds (about 2 in.) and

put in a large bowl, along with juices from roasting pan. Add about half of barbecue sauce, enough to coat meat well. Shred meat more finely with your fingers, adding more sauce if you like.

6. Make slaw: In a large bowl, mix cabbage, carrots, cilantro, sesame seeds, and 1 ½ tsp salt. Whisk together vinegar, honey, and oil. Taste and add more salt or vinegar if you like, then toss with slaw.

7. To serve: Preheat oven to 325°. Separate rolls into halves and toast on a baking sheet, cut sides up, until just crisp, 5 to 8 minutes. Spread with mayonnaise, then make sandwiches with beef and slaw (about ¼ cup beef and 2 tbsp. slaw per slider). Serve with extra hot sauce.

MAKE AHEAD *Meat, through step 5, up to 2 days, chilled (reheat at 350° until hot, about 30 minutes, before proceeding). Slaw and vinaigrette, up to 1 day, chilled separately (toss closer to serving). Composed sandwiches, 2 hours (or longer if you have space to chill them); reheat at 400° just until warm, about 3 minutes.*

PER SERVING 290 Cal., 40% (116 Cal.) from fat; 17 g protein; 13 g fat (2.6 g sat.); 27 g carbo (1.3 g fiber); 711 mg sodium; 45 mg chol.

BACON-WRAPPED FILLET OF BEEF

MAKES 30 TO 35 SLICES / 40 MINUTES, PLUS TIME TO BRING BEEF TO ROOM TEMPERATURE

"Quite grand but so easy to do," says Best. "It's delicious warm or cold, and will be one of the first dishes to be finished off. I specifically keep this very simple, with no spices, for

those who have a more traditional palate." • Preheat oven to 450°. Season a **room-temperature whole beef tenderloin** (about 5 lbs.) with **kosher salt** and **freshly ground pepper**, wrap in about 1 lb. **thinly sliced bacon**, and roast until it registers 125° in middle of narrowest end on an instant-read thermometer, 25 to 30 minutes. Let rest 10 minutes, then slice thinly. Serve fanned out on a platter, sprinkled with a little more salt. Melts in your mouth.

** Serve with horseradish cream if you like: Stir ¼ cup prepared horseradish into 2 cups sour cream. Stir in chopped chives.*

MAKE AHEAD *Bacon-wrapped beef, up to 1 day; let come to room temperature before cooking. Cooked beef, up to 1 day; let come to room temperature before serving.*

PER SLICE 210 Cal., 49% (103 Cal.) from fat; 26 g protein; 11 g fat (4.2 g sat.); 0.2 g carbo (0 g fiber); 284 mg sodium; 79 mg chol. LC/LS

HEARTY WINTER SALAD

MAKES ABOUT 8 QTS. / ABOUT 30 MINUTES

Best likes this salad for large parties for many reasons: It's sturdy, so it won't wilt before the guests come. It's vegan.

And, she adds, "the potatoes make the salad hearty, helping to lace your guests' tummies with all the cocktailgoing on!" She serves it on a platter rather than a traditional salad bowl. "Salad bowls tend to be somewhat less inviting to guests... a bit like a trough."

3 lbs. baby Yukon Gold or red potatoes

5 heads radicchio (about 3 ½ lbs.)

½ cup sherry vinegar

1 ½ tsp. kosher salt

1 tsp. freshly ground pepper

2 tbsp. Dijon mustard

3 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 cup extra-virgin olive oil

3 cans (14 to 15 oz. each) chickpeas (garbanzos), drained and rinsed

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil, season with salt, and add potatoes. Reduce heat to a simmer, cover, and cook potatoes until tender when pierced with a knife, about 15 minutes. Drain potatoes and let cool.

2. Meanwhile, cut radicchio into quarters and remove cores. Tear radicchio into bite-size pieces.

3. Combine vinegar, salt, pepper, mustard, garlic, and oil in a jar. Shake to mix well. Taste and add more salt and pepper if you like.

4. Crush potatoes slightly with bottom of a heavy glass or a potato masher (this helps them absorb vinaigrette). Combine potatoes, radicchio, and chickpeas in a very large bowl (or 2 bowls). Toss salad with vinaigrette and arrange on platters.

MAKE AHEAD *Up through step 3, 1 day ahead, chilled (store vegetables separately).*

PER ½-CUP SERVING 91 Cal., 51% (46 Cal.) from fat; 2.2 g protein; 5.1 g fat (0.7 g sat.); 9.3 g carbo (1.9 g fiber); 155 mg sodium; 0 mg chol. LC/LS/VG



Clockwise from bottom left: A holiday brass quintet assembled from San Francisco's symphony, opera, and ballet; connecting in the dining room; charm session.





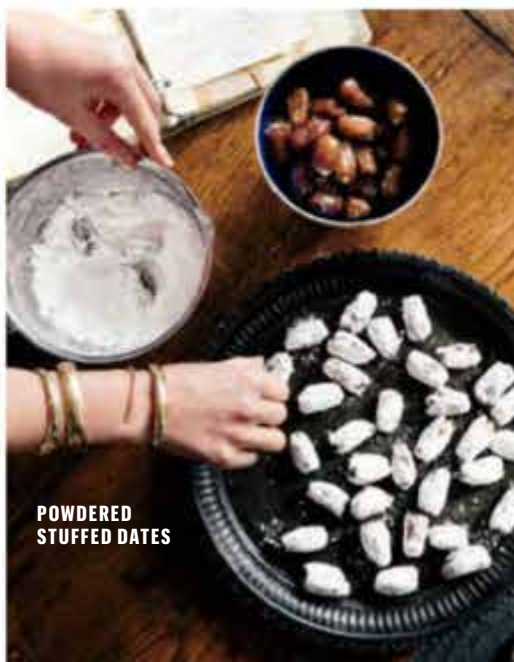
HEARTY WINTER SALAD



POINT LOBOS COCKTAIL



RUM AND HONEY-ROASTED
CAYENNE-CUMIN CARROTS



POWDERED
STUFFED DATES

POWDERED STUFFED DATES

MAKES 50 / 20 MINUTES

"My grandmother used to arrive at Christmas with these dates," Best says. • Pit 50 **Deglet Noor** or **Medjool** dates. Smooth **lemon zest** (about 1½ tbsp. total) in each date's insides. Stuff with **walnut halves** or pieces. Roll in **powdered sugar** (about 1 cup total).

PER DATE 43 Cal., 28% (12 Cal.) from fat; 0.5 g protein; 1.3 g fat (0.1 g sat.); 8 g carbo (0.7 g fiber); 0.2 mg sodium; 0 mg chol. GF/LC/LS/VG

BLACK OLIVE
TAPENADE

NO ONE'S
CHECKING
A CELL
PHONE AT
THIS PARTY



NANNY'S SAND TARTS

MAKES 10 DOZEN / 1½ HOURS

Best makes these at Christmas, using her great-great-grandmother Susie's recipe from 1850. "They're chewy-firm and reminiscent of snickerdoodles... homey and comforting."

½ lb. salted butter, softened
2¼ cups sugar, divided
3 cups plus 3 tbsp. flour
2 large whole eggs, beaten
1 tbsp. cinnamon
1 large egg white, beaten well
¾ cup almond slivers or
blanched whole almonds

1. In a mixer, cream butter with the paddle attachment on medium speed until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes, scraping bowl and beater as needed. Gradually beat in 2 cups sugar, then beat until fluffy again, about 10 minutes. Reduce speed to low and gradually beat in flour, scraping bowl and beater a couple of times (dough will be uniformly crumbly). Add whole eggs and beat until smooth.
2. Turn dough out onto a work surface and roll into 2 logs, each about 2 in. wide. Roll in plastic wrap and chill at least 1 hour to firm up. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 375°.
3. Slice dough into ¼-in.-thick slices, then arrange slices on parchment-lined baking sheets. Mix remaining ¼ cup sugar with the cinnamon. Brush dough slices with egg white, then sprinkle with the cinnamon sugar. Push a few almond slivers into center of each slice.
4. Bake until pale golden on top, about 10 minutes (if you like them completely crisp, cook until browned

underneath, a couple minutes more). Remove and let cool on sheets until firm, about 10 minutes. Then transfer to wire racks to cool completely.

MAKE AHEAD *Raw dough, up to 2 days before baking, chilled. Finished cookies, up to 1 week, chilled, and up to 3 months frozen.*

PER COOKIE 46 Cal., 39% (18 Cal.) from fat; 0.6 g protein; 1.9 g fat (1 g sat.); 6.5 g carbo (0.2 g fiber); 14 mg sodium; 7.2 mg chol. LC/LS/V

NANNY'S WALNUT MERINGUES

MAKES ABOUT 2 DOZEN / ABOUT 1 HOUR, PLUS TIME TO COOL

These also come from Best's great-great-grandmother. "So fortunate to not be hand-beating the egg whites now!" says Best. The egg whites shouldn't be too warm—straight out of the fridge works just fine. If you'd like to double

the recipe, make two separate batches rather than a single big one.

1 lb. walnut halves
1 to 2 tsp. melted butter, for pan
3 large egg whites
2 cups powdered sugar
2 tbsp. self-rising flour
¼ tsp. vanilla extract

1. Preheat oven to 300°.
2. Spread walnuts on a rimmed baking sheet and toast in oven until medium golden brown, 10 to 15 minutes. Remove baking sheet from oven and pour walnuts onto a chopping board to cool; lower oven heat to 200°.
3. Line 3 baking sheets with parchment paper. "Grease up with a bit of melty butter or use a no-stick spray on the parchment to make doubly sure that the meringues don't stick," Best says. "Don't skip this step or you will cry later."
4. Crush walnut halves in your hands just to break them up a little—they should be very coarse. Whip egg whites with an electric mixer until stiff, then gradually add sugar and flour, scraping bowl every now and then. The mixture will be thick but pourable, like cake batter, and very glossy. Add vanilla and stir in the walnuts (leave behind any nut "dust").
5. Using two spoons, drop small mounds (about 1 heaping tablespoonful each) onto parchment. Throw into oven until dry and just beginning to delicately crack on top, 30 to 40 minutes (they should stay white). Let cool on baking sheets until completely dry.

MAKE AHEAD *Up to 2 weeks, airtight at room temperature (less if the weather is wet).*

PER MERINGUE 167 Cal., 66% (111 Cal.) from fat; 3.4 g protein; 12 g fat (1.2 g sat.); 13 g carbo (1.3 g fiber); 15 mg sodium; 0 mg chol. LC/LS/V

BEST'S BIG-PARTY TIPS

THE GUESTS

Invite lots of interesting people, from all walks of life and all ages. "It's like making a recipe; you know the connections that will work out well."

THE DECOR

Nothing should be too staged. "If everything looks just so, it makes your guests tend to act on edge and on show. That's a terrible vibe for encouraging people to create new relationships!" That said, do include touches of fun—a blackboard menu in the kitchen, or a guest book in the bathroom, "where people naturally contemplate."

LIGHTING

Put candles everywhere and twinkle lights in unexpected places (Best drapes them on the ram's head over the kitchen door). "Ban overhead lighting—it's harsh and unsexy."

MUSIC

"Usually I just get a friend to do Spotify. I really like the playlist 'Smart Conversations.'"

DRINKS

"Always self-serve. I don't want it to be fancy, and it's cheaper. Old silver cups I find at auctions for not much money—they last forever and don't break.

Also, I always serve pink Champagne for \$20 a bottle." Invite guests to bring their own bottles too.

FOOD

As with drinks, have some on the table before the party starts; Best begins with charcuterie, cheeses, and tapenade at minimum. Choose recipes that can be made ahead and don't need to be hot, and get help with serving. Provide vegans with hearty pasta or salads. And use small plates. "I used to throw away a lot of food when I used big plates." 🍴

T H E

By
JOANNA LINDBERG

E S C A P E

Photographs by
THOMAS J. STORY

A R T I S T S

A REAL ESTATE DEAD-END DROVE A COUPLE
TO THE HILLS—
AND TO A HISTORIC CABIN.



This was Plan B. Plan A was for Levi Velvick and his partner Lupe Cope to buy a home in San Francisco, where they'd rented for five years. But after being outbid on house after house in the city, Velvick remembered the 1885 former homestead he had spotted online a few months earlier.

The couple drove the hour and 15 minutes north to Glen Ellen to take a look. "It was the biggest dump you've ever seen," Velvick says before listing off its aesthetic sins: green shag carpet, dropped ceilings lacquered to a greasy high gloss, and rooms full of grasscloth wallpaper in 1980s-era peach.

But the price was right. Plus, Velvick had a hunch he could coax charm out of the place. He was right, though it took a year of weekends to strip away the dated finishes to reveal the cabin's bones.

"I really wanted to keep the integrity of the structure," says Velvick, a product developer who moonlights as an interior designer. So when he peeled away the wallpaper in the master bedroom to reveal the original redwood exterior wall of the cabin, it was like striking gold. It was marred by a hole where a window once was, but he and Cope searched the property for similar wood and filled it in. "I mean, I'm a scavenger. I want nothing to go to waste," Velvick says.

Still, he was in no way devoted to the home's original era. He's made liberal use of Benjamin Moore's Simply White paint to brighten up the 780-square-foot cabin, on the ceilings as well as on the tongue-and-groove paneling in the kitchen and dining area. The bathroom and kitchen both were modernized with help

A GOOD FRONT

The couple modernized the exterior with a few coats of Benjamin Moore's Willow CC-542 and Mascarpone AF-20. "We call it Hillside Cabin," Velvick says. "We get here and our mind-set shifts."

REVIVAL EFFORT

The rotting floor in the dining and kitchen area (top right), prompted the couple to replace it with wide pine planks. What ensued was a six-year debate about painting the kitchen wall white before Cope, eager to preserve whatever they could of the home's original features, reluctantly agreed. "It was a game changer," says Velvick. "The space opened up and it felt like the roof was raised by a foot." Velvick also designed a white oak cabinet with maple butcher block top (bottom right) and had a friend build it.



PROP STYLING: ROD HIRSKIND



THE ART OF THE HUNT

"I could go through the whole house and tell you the story of every piece," Velvick says. There's the one about begging a friend to give him the portrait that now hangs at the center of his gallery wall, (page 75). Or how he happened upon the mid-century Henredon sofa in Redwood City and drove it up to wine country. "I don't mind the hodgepodge feeling a little bit," he says. If an item catches his eye and is a classic, it usually finds its way to the cabin.



THE SIMPLE LIFE

"I'm on that simplifying bandwagon," Velvick says. He kept the master bedroom furnishings pared down to just the necessities—all the better to highlight the original redwood wall. In lieu of a closet, the couple built a pair of pine wardrobes (*opposite*) that flank a built-in bench and the self-portrait of a friend, another prized piece. "I met her when we were both working on a paint crew to make ends meet," Velvick says. He sent monthly installments of \$50 to the artist for years to buy it at a fair price.





NATURAL ASSETS

What others might view as an obstacle—a hulking boulder in the backyard—Velvick considered part of the charm, laying a stone patio around it. “I wanted to memorialize it,” he says. “It’s been there for thousands of years.” The backyard redo netted an all-in-one entertaining space with a dining area, an outdoor shower (*opposite, top left*), and the MVP: a sleeping porch. An L-shaped half-wall serves as both bench and boundary. A carpet of unfancy gravel and fern and citrus plantings fill the yard.

SALVAGED STYLE

A ceramic utility sink from a salvage yard adds flair to the humble materials—white subway tiles and a glass shower wall—in the bathroom. Velvick sketched an idea for the vanity and a friend built it out of wood from the property.

FINDING COMFORT

In summer, when the cabin heats up, the couple heads out to the 150-square-foot sleeping porch (*above and opposite, top right*). There, they get comfortable on vintage army cots and project movies on the wall.

from contractor friends. In the meantime, Velvick slowly filled the rooms with well-used flea market furnishings and a mix of thrift-store and fine art, trusting his gut that it would all come together.

Outside, progress was even more gradual. It took three years to rid their roughly one acre at the bottom of Sonoma Mountain of chain-link fence and overgrown plantings. But, once done, the couple reshaped the yard to include a dining area on a terrace in front, along with a living area, outdoor shower, and detached sleeping porch in the back.

In Velvick’s eyes, the cabin is far from finished. But he has no regrets. “It was the best decision we made, to stay in our rent-controlled apartment in the Mission and buy elsewhere,” he says. “The cabin is a great escape. We just hunker down and enjoy it.”

As this issue went to press, Sonoma and neighboring counties were experiencing severe wildfires. For information on how to contribute to relief efforts, go to [sunset.com/wildfires](https://www.sunset.com/wildfires).





SHOP THE LOOK

RED TICKING

Many of Velvick's textiles come from this Seattle shop, including rolls of European hemp and linen and pillows made from antique grain bags. "The owner Pam Robinson has been collecting vintage textiles for more than 20 years and it's the best collection I've ever seen." redticking.com.

GOODWILL, ONLINE

If you're up for a marathon scrolling session, "there is always a diamond in the rough" to be found on Goodwill's website, says Velvick. "Sometimes the site has bundles of vintage linens, and there might be one awesome sheet or towel wrapped up in a bunch of doilies. Several pieces from my art collection have also come from here along with some old Le Creuset pieces." shopgoodwill.com.

GRENOUILLE FRENCH ANTIQUES

A fixture at most California antiques markets, brother and sister duo Fred Testu and Coco Reichborn ship containers of French goods to the States regularly. "Coco calls me when the containers come in and lets me dig through crates and boxes," says Velvick, who has unearthed rustic tables, sets of white metal chairs, carved wood stools, and mismatched latte bowls. For details on their antiques market schedule, call (415) 948-0033.



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Food & Drink

*Salad
for days*
THE TASTIEST
MAKE-AHEAD LUNCH
p. 84

STRATEGIES

JUMP-START YOUR YEAR

*From our favorite healthy-eating experts,
25 tips, hacks, and easy recipes
(and it's not all kale chips,
we swear). By Elaine
Johnson*

FOOD STYLING: RANDY MON; PROP STYLING: EMMA STARJENSEN

LATER, SAD DESK LUNCH!

Put in some time on Sunday and you won't wind up reaching for that premade Caesar salad at lunch. Take a cue from Portland recipe developer and stylist Alison Wu (wuhaus.com; @alison__wu) and roast chickpeas, veggies, and seeds; throw a pot of quinoa on the stove; and whip up a quick dressing. With these building blocks on hand, making lunch becomes almost a grab-and-go affair. Here's how she assembles a healthy, satisfying, infinitely riff-able salad.

1.

In a lidded container, lay a base of quinoa, then a mix of rinsed and dried greens like baby arugula, torn kale and/or radicchio, and lettuces.

2.

Layer in roasted veggies. Try carrots, sweet potatoes, or cauliflower. Got an extra 2 minutes? Slice fresh radishes or fennel.

3.

Top with roasted chickpeas, toasted pumpkin and sunflower seeds, and fresh herbs.

4.

Pack dressing separately so the salad stays crisp.

Feel free to swap leftover chicken for the chickpeas—just shred and store in bone broth to keep it moist until it's time to pack lunch.

CRISPY ROASTED CHICKPEAS

MAKES 2 CUPS / 40 MINUTES

Preheat oven to 400°.

On a rimmed baking sheet, toss 2 cans (15.5 oz. each) drained **chickpeas**, 2 tbsp. **avocado oil** or extra-virgin olive oil, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. each **kosher salt** and freshly ground **pepper**, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. **chili powder** (optional). Roast, stirring occasionally, until golden and crisp, about 35 minutes.

MAKE AHEAD Up to 3 days, chilled airtight.

PER $\frac{1}{2}$ -CUP SERVING 173 Cal., 39% (67 Cal.) from fat; 7.4 g protein; 7.6 g fat (0.9 g sat.); 20 g carbo (6.6 g fiber); 495 mg sodium; 0 mg chol. GF/LC/VG

CREAMY AVOCADO CAPER DRESSING

MAKES $1\frac{1}{4}$ CUPS / 5 MINUTES

In a food processor, whirl $\frac{2}{3}$ cup **extra-virgin olive oil**, juice of 1 **Meyer lemon** or regular lemon, $\frac{1}{2}$ **avocado**, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup **water**, 2 tsp. drained **capers**, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. each **kosher salt** and **pepper**. Taste; add more salt if you like.

MAKE AHEAD Up to 3 days, chilled airtight; stir well before serving.

PER 2-TBSP. SERVING 153 Cal., 97% (149 Cal.) from fat; 0.2 g protein; 17 g fat (2.3 g sat.); 1.3 g carbo (0.7 g fiber); 110 mg sodium; 0 mg chol. GF/LC/LS/VG



"My three biggest pieces of advice for surviving the holiday season are to avoid skipping meals, wear real pants, and if you want dessert, put it on a real plate and enjoy thoroughly."

—Shira Lenchewski, RD, author of *The Food Therapist* (Feb. 2018); shirard.com, @shira_rd

GET-SMART SNACKS

Can't eat another carrot stick? Neither can we. Here's fresh, healthy inspiration for just those moments.



A soft-boiled egg with home-made everything seasoning.
—Diana Ngo



Half an avocado with sea salt and smoked paprika.
—Shira Lenchewski



"Prioritize color in your meals. In plant-based foods, color comes from phytonutrients, which act as antioxidants in our bodies. Think fresh herbs; sweet potatoes instead of white potatoes; purple or orange cauliflower over white; and brown, red, or black rice."

—Jenné Claiborne, author of *Sweet Potato Soul* (Feb. 2018); sweetpotatosoul.com, @sweetpotatosoul

MAKE EVERY MOMENT COUNT

Busy lives and from-scratch cooking can seem hopelessly at odds. They don't have to be, says Sara Forte (sproutedkitchen.com, @sproutedkitchen), an Orange County cookbook author (*Sprouted Kitchen, Sprouted Kitchen: Bowl + Spoon*) and mom of two. Here are her strategies for keeping her family's healthy eating on track and avoiding the temptation of frozen pizza.

MICROPREP

Instead of prepping all weekend, Forte makes the most of whatever kitchen time she gets. "While I'm feeding everyone breakfast, I'll sauté onions or chop fajita vegetables for dinner."

COOK ONCE, USE TWICE

"If I grill chicken and we do some Asian bowls one night, I grill extra and use it in a big chop salad or burritos for the kids the next night. Or if I roast some butternut squash as a side, I'll save half for a pasta dish."

WASTE NOT

"I try to think of what I already have. If I have some leftover salmon and tortillas? I'll make a sauce and a slaw, and we'll have tacos for dinner."



Stove-popped popcorn topped with coconut oil and nutritional yeast. —Jenné Claiborne



Coconut yogurt with fresh fruit and shaved dark chocolate. —Alison Wu



Sliced cucumbers doused with seasoned rice vinegar, pepper, and sesame seeds. —Katie Morford

LONG LIVE THE SMOOTHIE

It's one of the oldest healthy food hacks in the book: Drink your greens. But Amanda Frederickson (@amandafrederickson), a professional cook and food stylist in L.A., and nutritionist friend Kelly LeVeque (bewellbykelly.com) have come up with an intriguingly delicious version of the classic green smoothie. It's also packed with lots of protein and healthy fats—safeguarding you against unhealthy grazing later on. "It keeps me full for hours," says Frederickson.

Tiny hulled hemp seeds, aka hemp hearts, come from the same plant as marijuana but are buzz-free. They offer protein, healthy fats, and a rich, nutty flavor.



AVOCADO AND SPINACH SMOOTHIE

SERVES 1 (MAKES 2½ CUPS) / 10 MINUTES

In a blender, whirl the following until smooth: 1 cup **unsweetened almond milk** or beverage-style coconut milk (such as Califia Farms*); 1 large handful **spinach** leaves; 2 handfuls **ice cubes**; 2 tbsp. **almond** or peanut **butter**; 2 tbsp. **vanilla protein powder***; ½ ripe **avocado**; ½ ripe **banana**; 1 tbsp. **hulled hemp seeds**; and 1 pinch **cinnamon**.

*Find at well-stocked grocery stores. Frederickson likes vegetable-based Ora Organic and Vega protein powders; find online.

PER SERVING 560 Cal., 66% (369 Cal.) from fat; 21 g protein; 41 g fat (4.8 g sat.); 37 g carbo (13 g fiber); 344 mg sodium; 0 mg chol. GF/LS/VG



The beauty of the sheet pan concept is its flexibility—just choose ingredients that are similar in thickness and cook at the same rate. And don't load up the pan with more than a single layer.

YOUR WEEKNIGHT SAVIOR

"Fab, fuss-free dinners are my holy grail," says Michelle Tam (nomnompaleo.com, [@nomnompaleo](https://www.instagram.com/nomnompaleo)) about sheet pan meals. This one is adapted from her and husband Henry Fong's latest Nom Nom Paleo cookbook, *Ready or Not!* "Sheet pan suppers allow me to maximize the amount of veggies for dinner," she says. "And cleanup is a breeze."

CHICKEN SAUSAGE AND VEGETABLES SHEET PAN SUPPER

SERVES 4 / 50 MINUTES

- 1/4 cup avocado oil or extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 small red onion, cut into 1/2-in. rounds
- 8 cooked chicken sausages or raw boned, skinned chicken thighs (1 1/2 to 2 lbs. total)
- 10 oz. brussels sprouts, halved (quartered if large)
- 2 medium Fuji apples, cored and cut into wedges
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- 2 tbsp. each cask-aged, syrupy balsamic vinegar* and chopped flat-leaf parsley

1. Preheat oven to 425°. Spread a large rimmed baking sheet with 2 tbsp. oil. Separate onion into rings of 2 to 3 layers. Set onion, sausages, brussels sprouts, and apples in pan. Liberally salt and pepper everything. Drizzle with remaining 2 tbsp. oil, toss to coat, and arrange evenly.
2. Bake until vegetables are tender and meat is cooked through, 25 to 30 minutes. Drizzle vinegar on top and sprinkle with parsley.

*Find at gourmet grocery stores and markethallfoods.com.

PER SERVING 574 Cal., 60% (342 Cal.) from fat; 27 g protein; 38 g fat (8.7 g sat.); 28 g carbo (7.3 g fiber); 1,542 mg sodium; 170 mg chol. GF



"I always like to cook with real ingredients, nothing prepackaged. I'm a firm believer in shopping the perimeter of the grocery store for produce and whole grains and doing your own thing."

—Tieghan Gerard, author of *Half Baked Harvest*; halfbakedharvest.com, [@halfbakedharvest](https://www.instagram.com/halfbakedharvest)



ALL-STAR SAUCE

With the right seasoning, even a virtuous chicken breast or handful of raw vegetables becomes something to savor. Enter romesco: “I’m obsessed with it,” says Erin Alderson, the Sacramento-based author of the vegetarian cooking blog *Naturally Ella* (naturallyella.com, @naturallyella), as well as the cookbook *The Easy Vegetarian Kitchen*. She uses the bold, smoky sauce on grain bowls, crudité, and anything else that needs some oomph.

SUNFLOWER SEED ROMESCO SAUCE

MAKES 1½ CUPS / 20 MINUTES

Toast ½ cup raw, unsalted **sunflower seeds** in a small frying pan over medium heat, shaking often, until fragrant and lightly browned, 4 to 6 minutes. In a food processor, whirl until fairly smooth: the sunflower seeds; ½ cup jarred roasted **red peppers**; 1 **garlic clove**; ¼ cup each canned **tomato purée**, **extra-virgin olive oil**, and **water**; 2 **tblsp.** each **flat-leaf parsley** and **sherry vinegar**; 1 **tsp.** **smoked paprika**; ¼ to ½ **tsp.** **cayenne**; and ¼ **tsp.** **sea salt**. Season to taste with more salt if you like.

PER 2-TBSP. SERVING 99 Cal., 84% (83 Cal.) from fat; 1.6 g protein; 9.3 g fat (1.1 g sat.); 2.8 g carbo (0.9 g fiber); 129 mg sodium; 0 mg chol. GF/LC/LS/VG



“Whole grains make my cooking so much more interesting—flavorful, richly textured, and satisfying.”

—Katie Morford, RD, author of *Rise & Shine* and *Best Lunch Box Ever*; momskitchenhandbook.com, @momskitchenhandbook



POWER UP YOUR PANTRY

Chefs have notoriously little time to cook at home (sound familiar?). But what chef Sam Smith of Portland’s Tusk (tuskpdx.com, @tuskpdx) lacks in hours he makes up for in a well-stocked pantry. Here are his staples for taking quick, healthy meals into the stratosphere.

CRUNCHY SEEDS

For a toss-it-on-everything mix, Smith combines 2 parts each hemp hearts and toasted sesame seeds* and 1 part poppy seeds. “I put this on yogurt, vegetables, roasted carrots and tahini, rice porridge, and oatmeal for flavor and texture.” *Smith buys extra-flavorful sesame from *thejapanesepantry.com*.

SOUR-SWEET VINEGARS

“In terms of commercial vinegar, there’s nothing comparable with Katz,” he says. “Their agrodolce-style is raw and unpasteurized, and brings so much to vegetables and meat dishes. My favorite is the LateHarvest Sauvignon Blanc.” katzfarm.com.

LACTO-FERMENTED PICKLES

“I really like the flavor, sourness, and health benefits of naturally fermented pickles,” says the chef. “For a snack, I’ll have greens, pickles, and crackers—I can totally crush that.” He’s a fan of kimchi from Uwajimaya markets (uwajimaya.com) in the Northwest and Bubbies Fine Foods’ Spicy Dill pickles (bubbies.com).

BROWN RICE

Smith cooks Koda Farms medium-grain brown rice from California in a rice cooker. “It’s nutty tasting and firm-textured,” he says. Then he uses it as a base for sautéed greens and kimchi, and more. koda farms.com.

THREE SPICES TO RULE THEM ALL

A trio of spices are on heavy rotation in Smith’s kitchen. “Sumac offers brightness and acidity,” he says. “Aleppo pepper is a little smoky and sweet and not too spicy. Cumin has a distinctive, subtle flavor that enhances anything.” oaktownspiceshop.com.

DELECTABLE CANNED SEAFOOD

“Conserva, a shop in Portland, imports seasoned canned seafood. “I love their sardines, calamari, and mussels.” conservashop.com.

PRIMO EVOO

Smith also goes to Katz for oils with deep character. katzfarm.com.

BEYOND AVOCADO TOAST

Sliced bread is the perfect blank canvas, ready to be loaded up with virtuous ingredients. Here are two toasts from the Instagram queen of the genre, Diana Ngo (@diningwithdiana), a cook and mom in the Seattle area who is working on her RD.

Give your toast an extra nutritional boost by choosing 100% whole-grain or sprouted grain bread, for extra fiber and protein. Ngo likes Dave's Killer Bread Powerseed or Whole Foods' 365 Multigrain & Seed Bread.

CILANTRO AND KALE PESTO TOAST WITH A FRIED EGG

SERVES 1 (MAKES ½ CUP PESTO, ENOUGH FOR 3 TOASTS) / 15 MINUTES
In a food processor, whirl ¼ cup packed **cilantro**, 1 cup packed **kale leaves**, ¼ cup **extra-virgin olive oil**, 1 tbsp. **white balsamic vinegar**, and 2 tbsp. **hulled hemp seeds*** until fairly smooth, scraping inside of bowl. Season with **sea salt** and freshly ground **pepper**. Smear a large slice of **whole-wheat toast** with 2 tbsp. unflavored whole-milk **Greek yogurt**, then with some pesto. Top with a **fried egg** and more salt and pepper.

*Find at well-stocked grocery stores.

MAKE AHEAD The pesto, chilled airtight, up to 2 days.

PER SERVING 405 Cal., 68% (277 Cal.) from fat; 15 g protein; 31 g fat (5.8 g sat.); 16 g carbo (1.9 g fiber); 331 mg sodium; 189 mg chol. LS/V

PEAR TOAST WITH YOGURT AND MINT

SERVES 1 / 15 MINUTES
Preheat broiler with rack 4 in. from heat. On a baking sheet lined with parchment, toss 1 sliced firm-ripe **Bartlett pear** with a squeeze of **lemon juice** and ¼ tsp. **avocado oil** or extra-virgin olive oil. Broil until slightly softened, 3 minutes. In a small bowl, combine 2 tbsp. unflavored whole-milk **Greek yogurt**, 1 ½ tsp. chopped fresh **mint**, and 1 tsp. **honey**. Smear generously on a large slice of **whole-wheat toast** and overlap pear slices on top. Drizzle with a little more honey and sprinkle with 1 tbsp. chopped roasted **pistachios**, a pinch of coarse **sea salt**, and a little more mint.

PER SERVING 279 Cal., 24% (67 Cal.) from fat; 8.7 g protein; 7.5 g fat (1.6 g sat.); 48 g carbo (8.1 g fiber); 421 mg sodium; 4.1 mg chol. V



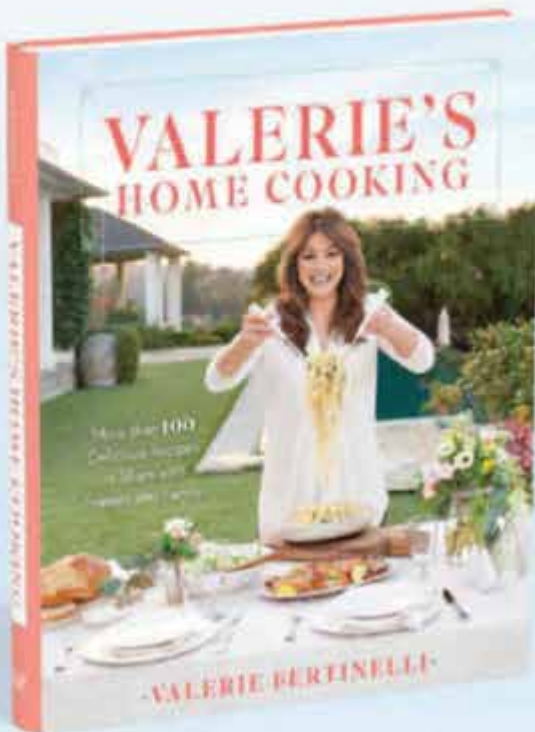
“The key is to have healthy foods ready to eat, and in plain sight. I keep hard-boiled eggs, peeled and sliced veggies and fruit, and made-from-scratch sauces and dressings in glass containers in the fridge; and nuts, jerky, and seaweed snacks in the pantry. With nourishing foods handy, I don’t wind up resorting to junky snacks.”

—Michelle Tam, author of *Nom Nom Paleo and Ready or Not!*; nomnompaleo.com and [@nomnompaleo](https://www.instagram.com/nomnompaleo)

DIGITAL BONUS

See how to make more healthy recipe hacks, from banana “ice cream” to zoodle “ramen”: sunset.com/foodhacks.

Valerie Bertinelli tells a story with each one of her recipes.



Valerie's Home Cooking invites home cooks into Valerie's kitchen to experience her family's favorite comforting classics with an original twist. More than 100 recipes are transformed into crave-worthy new dishes, each one as fresh, fun, and vibrant as Valerie herself.

AVAILABLE WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD

"Valerie may work as an actress but what she is, is a cook...and a damn fine one at that."

—Alton Brown

"When I turn the pages of this book, I feel as if I've been invited into Valerie's home."

—Alex Guarnaschelli

"Valerie's wonderful home cooking book makes it look so easy and so much fun!"

—Betty White

PEAK
SEASON

GREEN SHAKSHOUKA

SERVES 6 / 1 ¼ HOURS

This gutsy North African dish of eggs poached in a super-flavorful tomato-based sauce gets even better with the addition of a mountain of greens. It makes a great brunch or dinner for a crowd of holiday guests.

- 1 ¼ lbs. mixed winter greens (such as kale, spinach, and Swiss chard), rinsed well, water shaken off
- 1 tsp. cumin seeds
- ½ tsp. each coriander and fennel seeds
- 1 tsp. each smoked paprika and red chile flakes
- ¼ tsp. each freshly ground pepper and cardamom
- 6 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 large jalapeño chile, seeded and diced
- 1 ¼ cups (12 oz.) tomato sauce
- 1 ½ cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 7 oz. feta cheese, coarsely crumbled
- ½ cup chopped flat-leaf parsley, divided
- 3 tbsp. chopped cilantro leaves, divided
- 12 large eggs

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Remove stems and large ribs from greens and finely chop; set aside. Coarsely chop leaves and set aside.
2. Toast cumin, coriander, and fennel in a small frying pan over medium heat until fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes. Grind seeds with a mortar and

pestle. Add paprika, chile flakes, pepper, and cardamom; set aside.

3. Set a 9- by 13-in. or similar baking dish in oven to heat. Heat oil in a 6- to 8-qt. pot over medium-high heat. Add onion and chopped stems; cook, stirring often, until golden brown, 10 minutes. Stir in garlic, jalapeño, and spices. Add half the greens; cook, stirring, until wilted, 2 minutes. Add remaining greens; cook until barely wilted.
4. Stir tomato sauce, broth, and salt into greens and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, partially cover, and cook until greens are just tender, 5 to 7 minutes. Set aside 3 tbsp. feta cheese and 1 tbsp. each parsley and cilantro; stir the rest into greens.
5. Arrange greens in preheated dish. Nestle eggs into greens. Bake until egg whites are just set, 12 to 18 minutes. Scatter reserved feta, parsley, and cilantro on top.

—Julia Lee

MAKE AHEAD *Through step 3, chilled, 1 day; preheat oven with baking dish in it, reheat greens in pot, and continue with step 4.* 🍴

PER SERVING 423 Cal., 69% (290 Cal.) from fat; 25 g protein; 32 g fat (10 g sat.); 20 g carbo (6.5 g fiber); 1,227 mg sodium; 401 mg chol. GF/LC/V

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Day 3—Wildlife Rescue, Fortuna

This morning, drive by San Jose's Plaza de la Cultura, Central Park, and the National Theatre. Next, visit a wildlife rescue center. Here, injured birds and animals are rehabilitated for release back into the wild. Continue to Fortuna in the San Carlos Valley for a two night stay.



Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge

Day 4—Caño Negro, Hot Springs

Cruise on the Rio Frio River, gateway to the world famous Caño Negro wildlife refuge, home to many migratory birds found nowhere else in Costa Rica. Look for black turtles, whistling ducks, roseate spoonbills, cormorants, anhingas, blue heron, and northern jacanas. Watch for caimans, howler monkeys, spider monkeys, green iguanas, and water-walking lizards. Enjoy a relaxing soak in volcanic hot springs.



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HOLIDAY
BAKING

REMAKE OF A CLASSIC

The traditional Yule log dessert
gets a Western makeover.

By Elaine Johnson

*Cookie leaves, marzipan
acorns, and chocolate-
cream cheese "bark"
create the look for our
oak tree bûche de Noël.*

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12 95-Point Argentine Reserve

11 Luxurious Napa Merlot

10 93-Point Spanish Garnacha

9 Rich California Reserve

8 Southern Italian Charmer

7 Gold-Medal Portuguese Find

6 93-Point Aussie Blockbuster

5 Glorious 2016 Bordeaux

4 Barrel-Aged Boutique Rioja

3 Gold-Medal Super Tuscan

2 Classic Argentine Malbec

1 Iconic-Estate California Cab

OAK TREE BûCHE DE NOËL

SERVES 12 TO 14 / 2½ HOURS, PLUS TIME FOR COOKIES AND ACORNS

The valley oaks that dot central California's golden hills were the inspiration for this spin on the French holiday dessert. Guests are sure to be impressed, but the dessert is pretty easy to pull off if you start a day ahead. You'll need a jelly roll pan; a small offset spatula and small fine-mesh strainer are also helpful.

CAKE

Salted butter for the pan
¼ cup plus about 2 tsp. flour
5 large eggs, separated
¼ cup granulated sugar
1 tsp. vanilla extract

FILLING

¼ cup hazelnut-flavored liqueur
1 cup heavy whipping cream
½ tsp. vanilla extract
2 tbsp. powdered sugar
⅓ cup each toffee bits, such as Heath, and finely chopped roasted hazelnuts

FROSTING AND DECORATIONS

8 oz. cream cheese, at room temperature
½ cup salted butter, at room temperature
1½ cups powdered sugar
6 tbsp. unsweetened cocoa
Silver pearl dust*
Lime-green color dust*
Rosemary branches or other slim, nontoxic twigs, about 8 in. long, leaves stripped
Oak Leaf Cookies (recipe at right)
Marzipan Acorns (recipe at right)

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Make cake: Butter a jelly roll pan* (a 10- by 15-in. rimmed baking pan); line with parchment paper. Butter paper, then dust pan with 2 tsp. flour. In a large bowl, whip egg whites on medium-high speed with a mixer until they hold soft, distinct peaks, 1½ to 2 minutes. Transfer to a medium bowl and set aside.
2. In the large bowl with mixer on medium-

high speed, whip egg yolks, gradually adding granulated sugar, until very light in color, about 5 minutes. Whip in vanilla until incorporated, then add remaining ¼ cup flour and whip to blend. Gently but thoroughly fold in egg whites.

3. Pour batter into prepared pan and gently spread smooth. Bake until cake is golden brown and center springs back a bit when lightly pressed, 12 to 17 minutes.
4. Let cake cool 3 to 4 minutes. Run a thin knife between cake and sides of pan. Turn out cake onto a smooth kitchen towel set on a work surface. Peel off parchment paper. Let cake cool completely on towel.
5. Make filling: Brush cake with liqueur, then cover with plastic wrap to prevent drying. In a clean medium bowl, whip cream, vanilla, and powdered sugar with a mixer on medium speed until thick, 3 to 4 minutes. Fold in toffee bits and hazelnuts.
6. Uncover cake and spread evenly with whipped cream. Lift towel on a long side and roll cake into a smooth, compact log. Cut 4 strips of parchment, each 2 to 3 in. wide, with 2 strips a little longer than cake and 2 a little wider. (These will keep board clean while you frost cake.) On a large board or flat platter about 14 in. by 20 in., arrange parchment strips in a rectangle a bit wider than cake. Lifting carefully, set cake seam-down on parchment.
7. Make frosting: Wipe mixer bowl clean. Beat cream cheese and butter on medium speed until well blended. Add powdered sugar and cocoa and beat until smooth.
8. Thickly spread frosting over top and sides of cake but not the ends, preferably using a small offset spatula. With edge of spatula, create irregular "bark" grooves in frosting. Run a knife along edge of cake to free frosting from parchment, but leave parchment in place. Chill cake, uncovered, until frosting firms, 45 minutes.
9. With a serrated knife, cut through cake diagonally 3 to 4 in. from 1 end, but leave piece in place. Pour a little silver pearl dust into a fine strainer over a plate. Gently tap strainer over cake to create as much gray outer "bark" as you like. Repeat with lime-green color dust to create spots of "lichen."



OAK LEAF COOKIES AND MARZIPAN ACORNS

TOFFEE AND HAZELNUTS FOR THE FILLING

10. Carefully pull out parchment strips and discard. Lift short piece of cake with a wide spatula and fit diagonal end of cake piece against cake roll to create a forked log.
11. Arrange rosemary branches so that they appear to be sprouting from log. Add about 10 cookie leaves and 8 acorns to branches. Slice cake crosswise and serve remaining cookies and acorns on the side.

*Find Wilton pearl dust and color dust at Michaels stores and on amazon.com. Find jelly roll pans at nordicware.com.

MAKE AHEAD Through step 8, chilled, up to 1 day ahead (drape with plastic wrap after 2 hours).

PER SERVING WITHOUT COOKIES OR ACORNS 370 Cal., 59% (218 Cal.) from fat; 4.9 g protein; 24 g fat (13 g sat.); 33 g carbo (1.2 g fiber); 165 mg sodium; 123 mg chol. LS/V





CHOCOLATE-
CREAM CHEESE
FROSTING

MARZIPAN ACORNS

MAKES 12 / 45 MINUTES

These little beauties add a lot of charm to the oak tree bûche. A V-shaped bottle opener (church key) is helpful for scoring “shingles” into the caps.

6 tbsp. almond paste, at room temperature, divided

Golden yellow, leaf green, and brown gel paste food coloring*

1. Put 3 tbsp. almond paste in a small bowl. Using end of a toothpick to dip into jar of food coloring, add 2 small smears yellow food coloring and a dot of green to tint almond paste; squeeze into paste to blend well, wearing disposable gloves, if you like, to prevent staining your hands. Add more coloring if needed until paste is the color of green acorns. Shape generous $\frac{1}{2}$ -tsp.

portions into 12 tapered acorns about $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. long; set aside, covered.

2. Put remaining 3 tbsp. almond paste in bowl and tint with yellow, green, and brown coloring to create tan for caps (start with 4 smears of yellow and a dot each of the other colors).
3. For each cap, roll a generous $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. almond paste into a ball. Poke a small finger into center to form a cap, then set cap over largest end of an acorn. Pat cap into place and tap edges to join acorn. Score “shingles” in cap with V-shaped end of a church key or tip of a small knife. Repeat to make remaining caps.

**Find Wilton gel paste food coloring at Michaels stores and on amazon.com.*

MAKE AHEAD Up to 1 week, airtight at room temperature (store in a single layer).

PER ACORN 32 Cal., 56% (18 Cal.) from fat; 0.6 g protein; 2 g fat (0.2 g sat.); 3.4 g carbo (0.3 g fiber); 0.6 mg sodium; 0 mg chol. GF/LC/LS/VG

OAK LEAF COOKIES

MAKES 18 TO 25 / 1¼ HOURS, PLUS 30 MINUTES TO CHILL

A cookie cutter and some food coloring are all it takes to turn sugar cookie dough into oak leaves. Wear disposable gloves if you like to keep the food coloring from staining your hands.

½ cup salted butter, at room temperature

¼ cup sugar

1 large egg yolk

½ tsp. vanilla extract

About 1¼ cups flour

Leaf green and black gel paste food coloring*

1. Using paddle attachment, beat butter and sugar in a medium bowl with a mixer on medium speed until smooth. Beat in egg yolk and vanilla. Add $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups flour and beat until well blended. Using end of a toothpick, add 2 small smears of green food coloring and 1 of black and blend well. Add more coloring as needed until dough is dark green. Flatten dough into a 1-in.-thick disk. Wrap in plastic wrap and chill about 30 minutes (or longer if it's still sticky).
2. Preheat oven to 300°. On a floured board, roll dough $\frac{1}{8}$ in. thick. Cut out leaves with a $3\frac{1}{2}$ - to 4-in. by 2-in. oak leaf cookie cutter*. Set leaves on 2 ungreased baking sheets, then reroll scraps as needed. With edge of a small metal spatula or a toothpick, score leaves to make veins.
3. Bake cookies until slightly darker at edges, 15 to 20 minutes, switching pan positions halfway through. Let cookies cool on baking sheets a few minutes, then transfer to racks to cool completely.

**Find Wilton gel paste food coloring at Michaels stores and on amazon.com. Find Foose oak leaf cookie cutter on amazon.com.*

MAKE AHEAD Up to 2 days, airtight at room temperature, or up to 1 month, frozen.

PER COOKIE 66 Cal., 53% (35 Cal.) from fat; 0.8 g protein; 3.9 g fat (2.4 g sat.); 6.8 g carbo (0.2 g fiber); 30 mg sodium; 17 mg chol. LC/LS/V

SIP

SWEET TALK

Decadent dessert wines to top off your meal

By Sara Schneider

THERE'S AN OLD SAYING about wine drinkers in this country: We talk dry but drink sweet—meaning that we secretly prefer wines with a little sugar left in them after the fermentation has been stopped. Brushing aside the snarky judgment buried in that, my contention is that we actually don't drink sweet enough. Yes, we love our red blends that are soft and sippable because they have a smidgen of sugar. But we shun truly sweet wines—which leaves us missing out on the West's exquisite dessert wines.

I'm not talking about sweet fortified wines here (port, sherry, and the like), although those are also worthy of their share of today's highly allocated carbs. I'm talking about late-harvest whites whose berries, in the Old World tradition, have been left on the vine until their sugar levels are high and their fruit flavors have morphed into the realm of dried stone fruit and tropicals.

Merry Edwards, legendary Sonoma winemaker who crafts a beautiful sweet Sauvignon Blanc, explains her inspiration: "I have always been enamored with the great late-harvest wines of the world—the best Sauternes and Trockenbeerenauslese." The former is the famed sweet white of Bordeaux, the latter ("TBA" for short) the sweetest of the German whites, both made from grapes that have been infected with the ominous-sounding fungus *Botrytis cinerea*, or "noble rot." In the process of drying and shriveling the grapes, botrytis leaves behind rich honeyed flavors and a haunting minerality—qualities key to the reputations of both wines.

Noble rot is a player in many of the best late-harvest whites in the West, although by no means all. (There's no botrytis-on-demand; it's a spontaneous phenomenon, and unwelcome in the wrong grapes at the wrong time.) And here, beyond the Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, and Muscadelle of Sauternes, and the Riesling of most TBAs, wine-makers are letting other varieties hang—from Chardonnay to Viognier—to the good fortune of our holiday tables.

S **DIGITAL BONUS** Find recipe suggestions to pair with the wines shown here at sunset.com/dessertpairings.

PAIR IT

While it's tempting to sip these honeyed beauties as dessert on their own, that would be missing the point. Their nutty, floral, spicy character is a foil to some of winter's best desserts. In our test-kitchen tastings, they particularly shone with fruit, nut, and spice-driven sweets. High marks for any ginger, caramel, and cream involved. But if you truly reach your sweet limit, go with after-dinner cheese—blue, brie, or something nutty like a P'tit Basque. The wine is like a drizzle of honey on top.

WHITEHALL LANE
2013 "BELMUSCATO"



FOOD STYLING: RANDY MONI; PROP STYLING: EMMA STAR JENSEN; BOTTLES: JEFFERY CROSS

OUR PICKS

1

Far Niente 2011 "Dolce"

(Napa Valley; \$85, 375 ml.)

Gloriously spicy, with caramelized dried papaya and pear laced with orange zest.

2

Frank Family Lewis Vineyards Late Harvest Chardonnay

(Carneros, Napa Valley; \$100, 375 ml.)

Honeyed pear and apricot nectar give way to exotic tropical fruit and spice.

3

Grgich Hills 2013 Late Harvest "Violetta"

(Napa Valley; \$85, 375 ml.)

A blend of Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, and Gewürztraminer, sandwiching rich but bright orange and dried stone-fruit flavors between earthy minerality and high-toned floral notes.

4

La Crema 2013 Saralee's Vineyard "Sweet As" Gewürztraminer

(Russian River Valley; \$35, 375 ml.)

A riot of jasmine and lavender wraps around juicy apple, Asian pear, and Meyer lemon.

5

Merry Edwards 2014 Late Harvest Sauvignon Blanc

(Russian River Valley; \$48, 375 ml.)

Delicate honeysuckle, almond blossom, and kiwi notes lead to candied clementines and caramelized ginger.

6

Robert Mondavi 2015 "Moscato d'Oro"

(Napa Valley; \$25, 375 ml.)

A hedonistic and exotically floral mélange of citrus, peach, and dried mango.

7

Stony Hill 2015 "Semillon de Soleil"

(Napa Valley; \$30, 375 ml.)

Refreshing salinity balances mouth-filling apple, pear, mandarin, and sweet spice.

8

Whitehall Lane 2013 "Belmuscato"

(Napa Valley; \$24, 375 ml.)

Honeysuckle, peach, and tart citrus zest are balanced by savory crushed herbs and warm spices.



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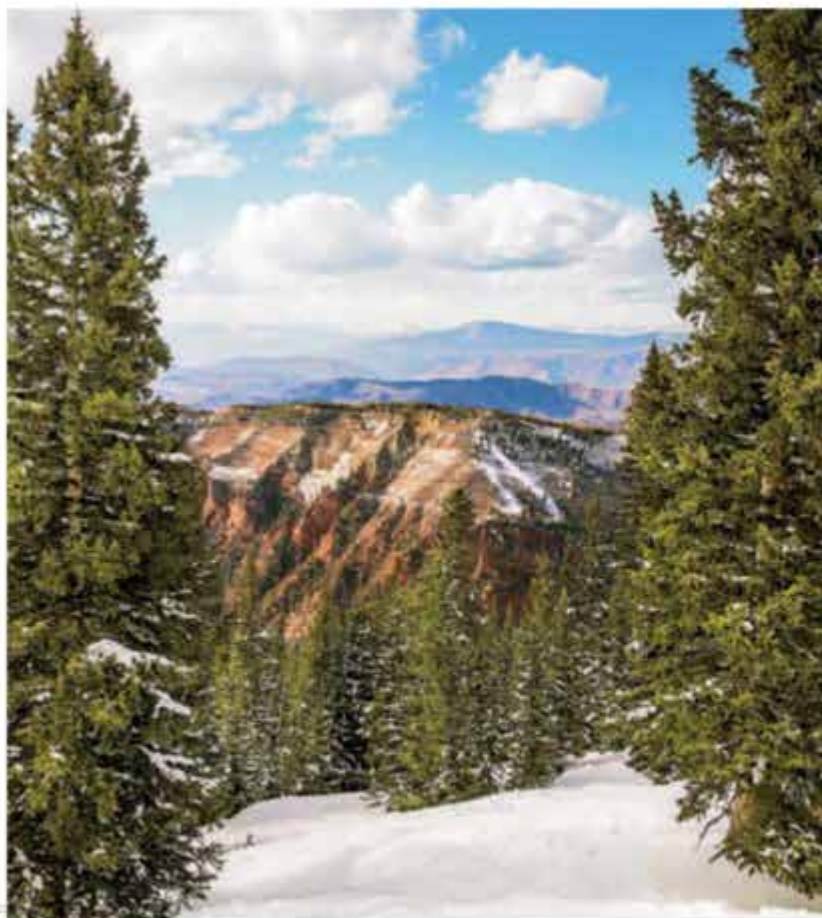
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The background of the entire page is a photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, several tall palm trees with green fronds and some brown coconuts are visible. The sky is a vibrant blue with wispy white clouds. The overall scene is bright and sunny, typical of a desert environment.

Sunset

UP NEXT

DESERT GETAWAY!

Enjoy the best in modern and classic design with a trip to one of our favorite winter retreats. To celebrate the debut of the *Sunset* Idea House in Palm Springs, we partnered with visitpalm Springs.com to craft an escape for two to the warm-weather oasis. The prize package (worth \$1,742): an architecture tour with the Palm Springs Mod Squad; a private safari at the Living Desert Zoo & Gardens, including hands-on experiences like giraffe feedings; a \$50 gift certificate for Village Pub; a \$200 gift certificate for Copley's on Palm Canyon; and a three-night stay at The Monkey Tree Hotel, a midcentury boutique property. To learn more about our Instagram contest, visit sunset.com/palm Springscontest (Nov 16–Jan 10). —Kendra Poppy

LISA CORSON/GALLERY STOCK

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